

# Sewanee Review

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Harvey Eagleson is a member of the Department of English in the California Institute of Technology.

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# Sewanee Review

[Founded 1892]

EDITED BY

WILLIAM S. KNICKERBOCKER

## ASIDES AND SOLILOQUIES

**D**ID Providence, in a mood of gentle irony, inspire George Santayana to compose and publish his "memoir in the form of a novel", *The Last Puritan*, at this particular time? Puritanism has always been Santayana's King Charles's head. Philosopher as he is, he has persuaded himself that New England is America, and America is Puritanism.

How can one muse about Santayana without recalling his retort to his "friendly critics"? In *Soliloquies in England* he wrote: "Now that for some years my body has not been visible in the places it used to haunt (my mind, even then, being often elsewhere), my friends in America have fallen into the habit of thinking me dead, and with characteristic haste and kindness, they are writing obituary notices, as it were, on my life and works. Some of these reach me in this other world [viz. Europe] . . . and without the aid of any such stratagem as Swift's, I have the strange pleasure of laughing at my own epitaph."

Who, having been for this long time past subtly and secretly influenced by Santayana, could deny giving an elderly gentleman of reflective and cloistral habits a pleasure of this macabre variety, especially if it amuses him?

**C**HARLES LAMB is reported to have said that though he practised all his life to sing "God Save the King", he never came within several quavers of it. I feel that way about philosophy. I cannot honestly say that I have shown Lamb's diligence and perseverance in my own well-intentioned efforts to learn, master, and adopt some system of philosophy. All I can say is that there *was* a time when I tried to pitch my mind to some philosophical tune (or system of exact thinking), only to discover, to my humiliation, that my mind was incapable of philosophic exactitude: that I am probably by nature incompetent, either of completely comprehending and therefore adopting some system, or of adequately adapting one or several to my peculiarly unphilosophical mind. Not that I am hostile: O no! On the contrary, I have a distressing and, I suppose, ignoble ambition to read philosophical works I cannot understand: like Husserl's or Vaihinger's, or (for that matter!) Santayana's esoteric treatises on "Essences". Mind you, I don't say that I don't take in, more or less, philosophies about philosophies—I take to reading Histories and "Outlines" of Philosophy with a most plebeian gusto. Like Arnold, my passion is for

Lucidity, lucidity,  
I seek it with avidity!

When I discovered that I could not look Philosophy straight in the face without blushing, as if I saw Venus Aphrodite herself rising from the sea, beautifully nude, freshly pink and alluring on her cockle shell—I was temporarily under a cloud. Whence this modesty that made me, unlike Euclid, so unable to look on beauty bare? I did my best to hide my naïveté. Fortunately, my distress was only temporary, because at a memorable moment, when I could no longer endure my philosophical confusion, I was relieved by discovering Santayana. I suspect Santayana has relieved many other Americans of a similar embarrassment by informing them, in a series of magnificent works, that philosophy is not a matter primarily of its objective truth or of the necessity of its acceptance or rejection; but rather a matter of its aesthetic enjoyment. In various keys, he has repeated that a philosophy is attractive chiefly as a work of art, a composed prose symphony

in reflective form, which has its beauty in whatever unity, symmetry, and refraction of the philosopher's temperament among the inescapables of life it may possess. The more it approximates intellectual chamber music the more delightful it is.

Certainly Santayana's own philosophy is an armchair concert in exquisite prose which excites his reader's mind to reverberations. Perhaps this is why literary people like his writings so much, and why professional philosophers so little, if we are to believe Robert Bridges and the *London Times Literary Supplement*. The former has noted that "... it has been said that George Santayana has imperilled the recognition of his philosophy by the fine robes in which he has consistently presented it"; and the latter, "Even if his philosophy does not satisfy us, we must enjoy his art. If we cannot believe that he tells us the truth about the nature of the universe, he tells us many incidental truths about the nature of man." And Dr. Harold A. Larrabee to the same effect: Santayana is "one of those rare creatures, a contemporary philosopher whose writings are of sufficient distinction to be read and appreciated by laymen whose connoisseurship is literary or scholarly, without being specifically philosophical."

PERHAPS one of the salutes which the smallest university in America could through this Quarterly make to the oldest and most influential, in this year of the latter's three hundredth anniversary, is to note Santayana as one of its numerous creative minds. Santayana was not only a product of Harvard but more than a quarter of a century was one of its great and influential professors.

Though his *The Genteel Tradition at Bay* was an ironic criticism of Harvard "neo-humanism", Santayana was basically in agreement with Professor Babbitt in his acceptance of three levels of existence: the animal, the human, and the supernatural, which he called "the Realms of Being". Instead of the Manichean (or Cantabrigian?) conflict in the soul between impulse and restraint, to which Babbitt constantly called attention, Santayana found creative possibilities in the pursuit of the good by a skillful manoeuvring of these three "Realms of Being". In the second of two

illuminating articles on Santayana, Dr. Harold A. Larrabee epitomized Santayana's ideas in this direction in the July-September, 1931 issue of the *SEWANEE REVIEW*:

Man finds himself situated . . . between a too-low level to which his body is chained by mortal destiny, but from which he must endeavor to rise if he is to hope for anything like happiness; and a too-high level to which he owes respect, perhaps envy, but not, apparently, allegiance. The good life for him cannot be wholly composed either of terrestrial travail or of celestial contemplation. He must seek a middle way, on what might be called the rational level, material in its conditions and spiritual in its guiding ideals. There the aspirant to the Life of Reason may construct his home, refusing to immerse himself wholly in the daily round of physical concerns, or in the mystical envisaging of the essences. By an appropriation of the traditions of the past and their transformation into a living culture, he may hope to rear a habitation for his spirit. Neither the past alone nor the present alone is enough to give a significant pattern to life. The Life of Reason is both a heritage and a promise.

Santayana supplies us with the clue which assists in escaping the *impasse* to which over-addiction to the Humanist technique of the *frein vital* or "inner check" leaves us.

ONE may say of Santayana in his rôle of an interpreter or critic of American culture, that what was said of a certain poet applies as pertinently to him: "he is a beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain." He is not disparaged as a philosopher when he is considered as a critic of the mind and soul of America. His earliest works, including the *Reason/oh Life* volumes issued, I fancy, from a particular disturbance of his spirit in a time when the sense of his being an alien in America was most strongly borne in upon him. In 1898, the United States went to war with Spain, Santayana's ancestral home; at the very moment, almost, of his beginning to write. He then wrote a poem—and revealed his emotions at that time. Picture him becoming acutely aware of his spiritual isolation at such a time in the highly self-conscious community of Cambridge,



Massachusetts, and the imaginative escape to Greek philosophy he was compelled to make to retain his spiritual poise. One suspects him, a child of the *fin-de-siècle*, soaked in Walter Pater's delicate soliloquizings, professionally a teacher of philosophy at Harvard, finding his intellectual home in Aristotle and Plato while his religious piety was vicariously appeased by his contemplation of the richness and variety of the Catholic tradition in which he was reared! Moved by speculative fancy, which he transformed into "imagination" which, in turn, he then translated into "reason"—and behold the miracle!—he completed the carrying of Paterian hedonism applied to philosophy into our day.

**I**S not this Providential irony? It is as if Späin talking to America through the voice of its exiled child was in reprisal doing what conquered Greece did to victorious Rome. "What he has said in English", wrote Dr. Larrabee, "are as many un-American things as possible. It is, as if, depressed by the cultural emptiness of America, Santayana had set out to fill up the gap. America lacked a tradition rich in beauty, tragedy, irony? Very well, he would do his best to supply one. But not in new forms, or from indigenous materials. An exiled European, a wanderer through the centuries, strayed perhaps from pre-Socratic Greece, he turned inevitably toward the great traditions of the classic era. There man has achieved harmonies that might at least be imaginatively recoverable in the present and infinitely to be preferred to the chaos of modernity."

It may be true that Santayana did not initiate the cult of expatriotism which has had exemplars in Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, Julian Green, Harold Stearns, and T. S. Eliot, but the ruminating observer of contemporary solutions of how to live a sensitive, beautiful, and intelligent life (even though one is American) can hardly fail to note that Santayana from Harvard as Henry James from Europe confirmed and rationalized the impatient cultural rebellion and subsequent flight of American expatriates to older, more deeply rooted, civilizations of Europe. Grateful though we may be for Santayana's musical musings on the state of culture in America, I see no reason to deny the truth



of Dr. Larrabee's conclusion: "Land of feverish enterprizes and compulsory gregariousness, America accentuated Santayana's cosmic aloofness, loneliness, and rebellion. Tragically it failed to enlist him in the immediate task of building up the new culture that is some day to fill our aching void. If it cannot be said that in Santayana America produced a modern philosopher of the first magnitude, at least we have entertained one unawares."

AS I read Santayana's *The Last Puritan*, I could not get Thomas Wolfe's *Of Time and the River* out of my mind and found myself comparing the two versions of American life. Wolfe's fiercely dionysiac novel is touched with American madness, albeit mystical, apocalyptic, feverish; while Santayana's "memoir in the form of a novel" has a ghostly, however dulcet, effect: occult, coming from a distance; say, from beyond the grave. If Wolfe is Faustian in the Whitman and Melville tradition, Santayana is Apollonian in the Henry James strain. As if he valetudinizes in his ascent of the Etna of contemporary tensions, Santayana (like Arnold's Empedocles?) delivers his prose testament of beauty. His is a sepulchral voice, speaking from the dead. Even if other works come from his pen, in *The Last Puritan* he has added to the glories of English prose style by his truly Platonic (by which I mean imaginative, reflective, artistic) soliloquy in the form of agreeable fiction. *Requiescat in pace!*

The chief weakness of Santayana's philosophy is that it is a philosophy for naturistic contemplation, perhaps motivated by an aesthetic and hedonistic egoism, rather than for a life of intelligent, symbiotic, social action. Is it a philosophy for agéd and reflective umbrella tenders in the Boston Athenaeum?

*by Stuart A. MacCorkle*

## ALAS, POOR JEFFERSON!

THE EXECUTIVE, CONGRESS, AND THE COURTS

**N**OT so many years ago an English writer began one of his books with the sentence: "A new political philosophy is necessary to a new world." Strikingly enough, for the past few years we have heard a similar cry coming from many of the "high places" in this country. Often persons in authority have done more than theorize; they have on occasions attempted to make practice conform with theory. With what success?

### I.

Within recent months the Constitution has faced a test. The Nation has become intensely conscious of the fact that it has a federal Constitution. The voices of Jefferson and Calhoun, of Hayne and Douglas, are again heard throughout our land. A document which was signed with so many misgivings and accepted with such backwardness has again been brought into the limelight. We are daily being confronted with the question—are we living wisely under limitations of the great compact formulated some one hundred and fifty years ago?

The alphabetical agencies of the New Deal have constituted an enormous extension of federal power. The corner stones of the New Deal edifice, the National Industrial Recovery Act, and the Agricultural Adjustment Act, when examined by our courts have been judged as placing too great a strain upon our basic law. As Professor Howard Lee McBain said, "the limits are fixed by the Constitution." This being the case, it now begins to appear that no basic economic change can be made without amending the fundamental law.

In the early spring of 1935 the Supreme Court of the United

States emerged from "the twilight" where it had dwelt for two years while President Roosevelt dominated the arena.

Let us turn first to the case of the *Panama Refining Co. V. Ryan* (decided January 7, 1935). Here the Court, by a vote of eight to one, held unconstitutional Section 9c of the Recovery Act, which authorized the President to prohibit the transportation in interstate commerce of petroleum produced or withdrawn in excess of state quotas. The Court pointed out that the Act made provisions for an unconstitutional delegation of legislative power to the President in that Congress laid down no standard by which the President should determine when to exercise such authority. Here it was not a case of subject matter, an argument which the Court was to use a little later in the *Schechter Case* with respect to Section 3 of the same Act. In the oil case the question was with respect to the range of discretion given to the President in prohibiting the transportation of such; while in the *Schechter Case* the question was more fundamental, whether there was any adequate definition of the subject to which the codes were addressed.

The Court in the latter case again took the opportunity of applying the principle of the separation of powers. In fact, the Poultry Code could have been disposed of by the Court's finding that it involved an improper delegation of congressional power to the President. The judicial tribunal chose, however, to rest its decision in part upon the ground that Congress itself had no power to regulate the business of the *Schechters*. The decision pronouncing the Recovery Act unconstitutional was predicted upon two basic constitutional concepts, the separation of powers and dual sovereignty.

It is only the first of these principles that interests us at this point. In the Poultry Case the Supreme Court pointed to the Constitution where provision is made that "all legislative powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States" and stated that the discretion given the President by the Recovery Act in approving or prescribing codes, and in this way enacting laws for the regulation of trade and industry, is virtually free. The Court held, therefore, that the code-making authority thus conferred was an unconstitutional delegation of legislative power.

Chief Justice Hughes said, in effect, that to sustain the Presi-

dent's making laws in the form of codes, without being required by Congress to adhere to any standard or guide except the general aims set forth in the statute of the rehabilitation and stimulation of business, would break the framework of our Constitution.

On the same date as the *Schechter Case*, the Court invoked again the Constitutional concept of the separation of powers when it determined that Mr. Roosevelt had exceeded his authority in removing the late William E. Humphrey from office as a member of the Federal Trade Commission. It was the unanimous opinion of the tribunal that Congress clearly intended to restrict the President in his removal of members of this commission to the causes specified in the statute. To give Congress the privilege of delegating a legislative power to the President would be to sanction the commission of an act contrary to the integrity and maintenance of the system of government as ordained by the Constitution.

During the last summer, lower federal courts all over the country attacked the AAA, and public opinion seemed to have placed the law on the New Deal casualty list. The Circuit Court of Appeals in Boston last July, in reviewing the *Hoosac Mill Corporation case*, held the processing tax on cotton unconstitutional. Again we were told that Congress could not delegate legislative powers to the Executive Department, the Court holding that there had been an attempt to delegate powers by authorizing the Secretary of Agriculture to assess processing taxes with which to pay benefits to growers who took part in the AAA crop control programs.

Although the President, Secretary Wallace, and AAA Administrator Davis gave notice that, come what might, the AAA would go on in some form, the Supreme Court, in reviewing the *Hoosac Mills Case*, invalidated the AAA by a six to three decision. In this case the Court spent much time attempting to establish a doctrine contrary to the majority of its earlier decisions, that the delegated powers of Congress are limited in their scope by the existence of the reserved powers of the States. In fact, the main point upon which the decision seems to rest is that the Act invaded the reserved rights of the States.

Instead of invalidating the processing taxes on the ground that



the power to fix them was improperly delegated to the executive, as many of the lower courts did, the Supreme Court spent much effort discussing Congress' power to lay taxes to provide for "the general welfare", but, according to the ruling of this case, it comes within the providence of the Court and not Congress to determine what "general welfare" embraces. And here it seems apparent that the expenditure of money to improve the agricultural interests does not fall within the Court's conception of "general welfare."

To reiterate, in the "hot oil" case, the Court searched the law but could find no standard set to guide the President in the exercise of his power. No policy was fixed to govern his actions. There were the broad generalities of the introductory section but nothing more. When the Court turned to the *Schechter* case, it was again lost. There were no standards or rules provided by Congress to guide the President in code-making except the single phrase "codes of fair competition". "Fair competition" was something new to the Court. It included anything the code-makers might write into their codes provided they were successful in getting the President's approval. Even Judge Cardozo disapproved of such a delegation of powers.

What about the delegation of legislative power in the Agricultural Act to the Secretary? Has Congress laid down sufficient standards to guide him? Regardless of individual opinion, the Circuit Court of Appeals has answered this question in the negative. The Supreme Court, as we have seen, used other arguments in order to nullify the Act. The reasoning it presented at times appears obscure to the reader, and such is not wholly the reader's fault, for the judicial mind is not always easy to follow.

## II.

How much delegation of power does the Constitution permit? The courts have held that the executive may prescribe ordinances, make rules or regulations under the law; as John Marshall expressed it, "fill in the detail." Because of the complicated and rapidly changing conditions today, legislative bodies are unable to draft acts sufficiently detailed and flexible to meet constantly



arising complex problems. Some agency must be given the privilege of "filling in the detail", but there are limits beyond which Congress may not go. The established rule is that the delegation of power is constitutional only when the statute passed by Congress fixes the standards, states the rule of conduct, or establishes the clear principle which is to guide the executive. The general policy to be followed must be established by law; only the details of applying it may be left in the hands of the executive.

Administrative legislation, whether exercised by the President, the Cabinet, or the independent establishments, has been practiced since the beginning of the Union to the present day. The first meeting of Congress in 1789 authorized the chief of each department to "prescribe rules and regulations, not inconsistent with law, for the government of his Department, the conduct of its officers, the distribution of its business, the custody, use, and preservation of the records, papers, and property appertaining thereto." The Supreme Court has been consistent in not declaring unconstitutional a specific delegation of legislative power by Congress. On the other hand, it has been just as consistent in announcing the rule that Congress cannot delegate its functions to administrative officials without violating the separation of powers theory of our Constitution. While holding to this rule the Court has in such cases as *Field V. Clark*, *Union Bridge Company V. U.S.*, *Butterfield V. Stranahan*, *Interstate Commerce Commission V. Goodrich Transit Co.*, *First National Bank V. Fellows*, and the *Selective Draft Cases* permitted a specific delegation of power. The fact remains that Congress must be specific, the general policy to be followed must be established by law.

### III.

Many recent writers have remarked that two years is a long time for such a law as the NRA to remain on the statute books before it was declared unconstitutional. Other commentators tell us that our system is unworkable. They argue that the separation of powers is only workable with the help of the party system in which the executive is the leader of the dominant group in the legislature. To the latter assertion they hasten to add that this

normality is an ideal, not a description of the regular functioning of our system. On many sides we hear parliamentary government praised. But what is parliamentary government? There is no such thing in general. It is true that the English Parliamentary System has impressed the world. But though many attempts have been made to imitate it, the fact remains that such has not been accomplished. As Professor James Hart says, "It means one thing in England, where the Cabinet predominates, and another in France, where groups in the Chambers dominate the Cabinet."

Exponents of parliamentary government take for granted something which is extremely improbable, namely, that nations which have different histories will henceforth have the same future, that dissimilar causes will produce similar results.

Other critics decry the desirability of the separation of powers as they conceive it and dispute the value and the reality of the theory. President Frank J. Goodnow, like various French authors, argues that acts of a state, like those of an individual, naturally fall into two groups, those necessary to expression of the will of the state, and those necessary to the execution of this will. The former he calls political, the latter, administrative action. Such a classification, it must be admitted, rests on a difference of degree rather than of kind. The same can be said for the threefold classification.

On the other hand, few will deny the possibility of a twofold division of governmental functions. But it does seem to me, in the light of our past constitutional history, that there is ground to challenge an assertion which assumes that the tripartite division is fiction void of significance, necessarily disregarded in fact, and incapable of application. Nor do I agree *in toto* with Professor W. Y. Elliott's claim when he states in his new book, *The Need for Constitutional Reform*, "The system itself is unworkable."

Be it admitted that the principle of the separation of powers has at times proven to be cumbersome, and the courts on occasions have made exceptions to it, but this is quite different from saying that the doctrine is unreal or has broken down. Do not most rules work elastically? No rule or "principle of law", if one may use that term, can be applied at all times and under all conditions. As Professor Frederick Green so ably points out, "It is of funda-

mental importance to notice that the difference between legislative, executive, and judicial action depends upon the kind of action taken and not upon the kind of mental process involved in deciding whether and how to take it." Further, he says, "It is a mistake to think that the distinctions between the functions of government are unreal because there is often a choice which can be made. As to mental processes, the powers are indifferent; but as to results to be accomplished, and in a lesser degree as to mode of acting, they are circles which partly overlap."

Professor Harold J. Laski, while asserting that the business of government does not admit any exact division into categories, states that, "The Theory yet contains an important truth of which perhaps too little notice has been taken in our time . . . We look with suspicion upon executive justice. We insist that the independence of the judiciary is fundamental to liberty . . ."

The judiciary, and especially the Supreme Court, has come in for its share of criticism of late, and the decision of the Court in the recent *Hoosac Mills Case* has done little to bring about an abatement of this criticism. No doubt the political significance of the case will soon disappear, but it remains to be seen if the institutional significance will increase as the years go by.

The critics of judicial review have brought forth several proposals as methods of curbing the power of the courts. The more important of these are: (1) amendments to the Constitution so as to completely withdraw the power of the courts to pass upon the constitutionality of law or to broaden Federal powers directly; (2) the requirement of an extraordinary or unanimous vote of the judges as necessary in order that the Court declare void a law (Senator Norris proposes an Amendment that would prevent Supreme Court decisions holding acts of Congress unconstitutional unless concurred in by more than two-thirds of the members of the Court, and unless the action praying for such judgment shall have been commenced within six months after the enactment of the law); (3) an amendment to the Constitution providing that the re-enactment of a law held unconstitutional shall operate to override the Court's veto; (4) a few have even suggested that the membership of the Supreme Court be increased which would

permit the President to "pack" the bench and in this way lessen the power of the judicial body.

No word has come from the White House approving or disapproving any of these plans. However, Mr. Roosevelt, in addressing Congress on January the third, used these words: "The carrying out of the laws of the land as enacted by the Congress requires protection until final adjudication by the highest tribunal of the land. The Congress has the right and can find the means to protect its own prerogatives." These phrases speak for themselves.

Judicial control has objections, it is to be admitted, but so do each of the proposed remedies. Judged by the few times that the Court has permitted its destructive gavel to fall, it appears questionable if the present vehement attack upon its powers can be justified. One should keep in mind that in judicial supremacy the Court is passing upon both state and national law and that the institution operates far more frequently upon the former than it does upon the latter. To use the words of Professor McBain, "... in a Federal system such as ours there must be some national authority empowered to prevent the individual States from encroaching not only upon national powers but also upon the powers of one another. 'He [Mr. Justice Holmes] was manifestly right; and probably no authority more appropriate than the Supreme Court could be devised for this purpose.' The Court is the umpire both of the governmental separation of functions and of our Federal divisions of powers." In other words, the independence of the judiciary is essential to our form of government.

Mr. Justice Roberts, the spokesman of the majority in the Hoosac Case, took the opportunity of defining the position and function of the Court. To quote: "There should be no misunderstanding as to the function of this Court in such a case. It is sometimes said that the Court assumes a power to overrule or control the action of the people's representatives. The Constitution is the supreme law of the land ordained and established by the people. All legislation must conform to the principles it lays down. When an act of Congress is appropriately challenged in the courts as not conforming to the constitutional mandate the judicial branch of the government has only one duty—to lay the



article of the Constitution which is invoked beside the statute which is challenged and to decide whether the latter squares with the former. All the Court does, or can do, is to announce its considered judgment upon the question. The only power it has, if such it may be called, is the power of judgment. This Court neither approves nor condemns any legislative policy. Its delicate and difficult office is to ascertain and declare whether the legislation is in accordance with, or in contravention of, the provisions of the Constitution; and, having done that, its duty ends."

The principle of judicial review is neither new nor entirely an American creation. Professor Edward S. Corwin, in speaking of the doctrine states, "In Anglo-American constitutional history this idea is to be traced to feudal concepts and finds its most notable expressions in Magna Carta." In some states, before the drawing of the Constitution in 1787, the doctrine had received some recognition; and, according to Charles A. Beard, the reason it was not embodied in the Constitution was that the writers thought such a thing unwise.

Alexander Hamilton, while recognizing the judiciary as being the weakest of the three departments, was unwilling to dispense with it. President Wilson, in his *Constitutional Government in the United States*, spoke of the judiciary as a balance wheel of our entire system; "It is meant to maintain that nice adjustment between individual rights and government powers which constitutes political liberty."

It is true that the Court has not always accepted *vox populi* as *vox dei*. At times it has found itself very unpopular; on other occasions it has been in the happy position of rendering interpretations of law in accordance with public sentiment. Rarely has it opposed for long a deep and permanent political trend, nor has it spoken so frequently in the past. It is interesting to note that while more than twenty-four thousand three hundred and thirty-two Public Acts have been passed by Congress, only sixty-two statutes or parts of statutes have been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, and most of these have been since the Civil War. Of these, only a small percentage could be listed as being of first-rate significance. Perhaps, they were as follows: The Missouri Compromise, the Legal Tender Act (soon over-



ruled), the Income Tax Act of 1894, the Act of 1898 prohibiting interstate carriers from discriminating against labor unions, the Child Labor Acts, the Federal Corrupt Practices Act as applied to Senatorial primaries, the Act requiring Senatorial confirmation of Presidential removals from office, and the Minimum Wage Act for the District of Columbia. This listing does not take into consideration laws annulled during the present administration.

The New Deal Administration has found rough sailing for the ship of state because of the division of governmental functions into more or less air-tight compartments. Eight times has the Court ruled against President Roosevelt, and the end is not yet. The "hot-oil" case, the Railway Retirement Act, the N.R.A., the Farm Mortgage Act, and the AAA were all important.<sup>1</sup> Even the gold clause resolution was only partly spared from destruction. In ruling against the President, the Court has set forth its convictions against what appeared to be an all-powerful Congress and a somewhat idealized administration.

In conclusion it is to be admitted that with the ever-increasing complexity of governmental activity, it becomes more and more necessary to create administrative offices with less restricted authority. The swing in the future inevitably will be toward a strong executive, and a continually changing industrialized society will necessitate Congress' giving less consideration to administration and more to policy formulation. Granting all this, one must also concede that recent cases show the doctrine of the separation of powers to be active and still capable of application. Whether the future may bring about its abolition, posterity alone will know, but today our threefold classification of powers still stands. Its destruction would mean an impairment of the American governmental system.

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<sup>1</sup>As well as the T.V.A. decision of February 10, 1936.

*by J. N. Oldham*

## ANATOMY OF PROVINCIALISM

### II.

#### PROVINCIALISM OF MIND

**T**HERE is a language of ideas, over and above the ordinary grammatical language through which those ideas are uttered. This language of the mind is as varied in its adaptations to geographical divisions as the ordinary language is from person to person and place to place. Language is recognized as the expression of the collective mind of the people. Provincialism is to the mental and social idiom what local differences of diction and pronunciation are to language—and equally inevitable. A region can no more escape its provincialism than it can escape the peculiarities of the language of its place and generation. And like the vernacular of a given time and place, these mental systems are adequate to the purposes for which they are used: to express man, and to interpret the universe to him. But man's interests change, and the universe does not appear the same always. So the provincialism of a place undergoes a similar change.

If the essence of provincialism be convenient limitation of concern, then we may without violence point out the provincialism of mind which actuated some of the most widely praised contributors to world culture.

Milton had a rich education in the cultures and conventions of several nations and many periods of history. Certainly he was acquainted with the England of his time. He knew Roman history, particularly that of the Augustan Age. Macaulay states that he was particularly at home in Latin, the old international language and still at that time the language of diplomacy. Likewise he was proficient enough in all the European languages from which anything was to be obtained. Yet, because of some force within

himself or in his environment, he retreated from what may be called his complete or cosmopolitan experience, and selected for his most sustained efforts the much more limited, and to him more vital, Hebraico-Classical tradition. In this selection he had the advantage of liberation from mixed influences of a political and social nature, and the tremendous advantage of a concentrated and integrated ideology. It should be remembered that the Hebraico-Classical tradition is not wholly the product of Milton's genius of combination. The two strains represented there had been for a long time before Milton the accepted background of English education.

It might seem that the blending of two such powerful traditions into one would constitute a sort of cosmopolitanism. But would it? Only England of all European nations had made this special synthesis of two essentially opposing systems; and only limited portions of England's population came under the direct influence of *both* parts of the combination. Different versions of the Hebraic tradition of religion were current among all the people; but the classical influence was reserved for the upper classes. *Pilgrim's Progress* has always been much more comprehensible to the laity than has *Paradise Lost*. A fusion of separate cultural traditions into a new product forms a broad culture for literary purposes no more than the combination of the ideal of a Greek republic with the ideal of chivalry produced a nationally popular social system in the United States. *Paradise Lost* is the product of a very pleasing and satisfying mixture of ancient ideals, and it is popular as a piece of world literature. But it is popular (and excellent) not because of its apparently cosmopolitan background but because it is built clearly and definitely on a closed idiom—a system of thinking which is satisfying in itself and hence given a sense of finality and authority.

Much the same could be said of Petrarch. He did not give himself up altogether to the vernacular modes of literature of his time, but continued partly in the scholarly tradition of writing Latin, and regarded the sonnets as more provincial in their meaning and scope. When he took over the conventions of the love-songs of the *trouvères*, even with all the polish which his superior skill enabled him to give them, he was merely adapting himself to a

fashion which was particularly characteristic of his time and country. And the strength which the sonnet-convention has shown since his time is a tribute to the nicety with which he set the limits of that convention. One can now write a sonnet on almost any subject, but for a very long time the limits of the sonnet-sequence—its proper subject matter, its peculiar mannerisms, its methods of developing its themes—were as iron-bound and restrictive as the most limited of social provincialisms.

The ordinary version of provincialism is much more characteristic of Shakespeare than of either Milton or Petrarch. This man of "the most comprehensive soul" was in no sense a cosmopolitan in his experience or in his outlook. He remained William Shakespeare of Stratford, Gentleman—which means that he considered Stratford his seat. (And, by the way, the cultured gentleman in old and worthy tradition had a seat, a center for his world, a place where he retired from time to time to enjoy the native pleasures of hunting, reading, gardening, and entertaining.) But the provincialism of Shakespeare is shown not nearly so much in this name which he retained for himself as in his interpretations of characters and historical periods. His Englishmen are Elizabethan, and so are his Romans and Danes. Even his Shylock is basically the Jew of English tradition, embellished with individuality. The reference to players as "the abstract and brief chronicle of the time" reflects a native English custom with which he was familiar, but which was not so true of Ambleside's Denmark. The sounding of the clock in *Julius Caesar* is another Elizabethan anachronism. And examples of like nature may be multiplied in abundance to prove, not Shakespeare's fearful ignorance of history and fact, but his frank unconcern for accurate local color. His audience understood these anachronisms as parts of its native experience, parts of its familiar knowledge of human life, and was not shocked by the similarity of Caesar's Rome to their London. There is no need to defend Shakespeare for such "errors". He was interpreting ancient and foreign stories to contemporary Englishmen, and he did the most natural thing in the world when he used the externalities of the life with which they were familiar. By so doing, he conveyed to them more accurately his conception of the characters he drew. Had he been exact and scientific in re-



production of local color, he would have wasted a great deal of time, written fewer plays, and been a mediocre artist, if artist at all. His contentment with the England he knew served as the central portion of his system of art, because art, which is necessarily communicative, depends, as Arnold puts it, 'on an "order of ideas" and conventions for its intelligibility.

Following provincialism of mind still further, consider Whitman, who insisted on his doctrines of nationalism, adopted Manifest Destiny as a sort of credo, and preached a limited message of limitless expansion—always, however, expansion according to a formula of his own. The America of his dreams was to be built on a few well-chosen principles, among them faith in the physical man, faith in diet and exercise, faith in the excellence of the instincts of a lusty (not to say lustful) body, faith in man's ability to control through machinery, physical and political, his destiny. His *Song of Myself* and *Democratic Vistas* show a certain breadth of conception and enthusiasm, but they show much more breadth of *application* of a *few* ideas compatible with one another and quite conveniently limited in number. And even if put into use, these ideas could produce nothing more excellent than provincialism; they would still build only a limited system, and a great deal of the possible and the feasible in human affairs would have to be omitted. They might be used by smaller groups, however, without necessarily interfering with some other system, just as provincialisms can exist side by side for centuries and still retain their identity, or just as religious-economic patterns like the famous Brook Farm, the House of David, or the Order of Amish can exist in a township without necessarily upsetting the other cultural and economic arrangements of the section. A man's system of thinking, just as a community's patterns for social intercourse, is necessarily and profitably limited in its scope; or at least the points of greatest interest on him are so emphasized that the principle of selectiveness and limitation governs him.

What is true of the single mind is true of philosophical systems evolved from one or many minds. Certain postulates have to be accepted as the framework for a philosophy; once the postulates are accepted, the philosophy runs its course in set channels because it is limited from the outset. Reverse the postulates, and



you have a different philosophy. Take different ones, and you have still another; apply them differently, and you have still another, and so on. The difference between real Epicureanism and Stoicism is one of underlying ideas or postulations. Schopenhauer's gloomy and far-reaching distrust of the universe is reflected in his general judgments of life. Although Bacon took "all knowledge" for his province, he had a well-planned and integrated scheme for the conquest. He was not to limit what man should know; but he did prescribe definite ways for him to go about finding out what was knowable, and then the serviceable doctrine of utilitarianism was to determine what was feasible for society at large. His scheme was comprehensive, but it was committed, like all philosophies, to a few guiding principles which should concentrate its force and give it its value. Even the Liberals and the Humanists, while not committed to as tight systems as those of many philosophies, acknowledge limiting and guiding precepts.

In religion, it is needful only to mention the multitude of sects, each of which is distinguished by its peculiar concepts. Yet the doctrinal limitations of each sect are found adequate to its purposes, and the religious man seldom insists on the universality of religion-in-general. He tries not to spread religion but to spread his own brand of it; which is an acknowledgment that he finds its limited doctrines most desirable.

National ideals offer another instance of the recognized virtue—the inevitability—of limitation and integration. Imperialism, even, must be carried on according to some pattern. The Roman imperial system exemplifies the functioning of a type of intellectual and social provincialism, through the fusion and integration of a few dominant ideas, to which the far-flung provinces were in some measure subject. Military dominion, a broadly conceived plan of public works, insistence on the unifying influence of a state language, a certain feeling for the creative arts—these are among the dominant ideas of the Roman system. Ancient Greece selected and organized a set of concepts the most basic and beautiful produced by Western civilizations. A sense of personal honor, the necessity of knowing oneself, the dangers of extreme actions, a sense of proportion in art and life—these ideas are basic to the Greek system. Among modern nations, we have England with

its peculiar "power of conduct", its historic feeling for political liberty, and of later years its policy of economic imperialism. Other modern instances include France with its ancient hates and fears and enthusiasms, and Germany with its vaguely ridiculous ideal of *Kultur*—meaning, of course, the Teutonic variety. The essential materialism, the trust in Manifest Destiny, and the belief in a certain variety of "rugged individualism" need but be mentioned as marked characteristics of the American at home and abroad. The mere fact that *Greek, Roman, Gallic, British, and American* are qualifying adjectives indicates that certain characteristics are sufficiently limited to nations that the national systems are differentiated even more clearly than local provincial systems.

Looking at cultural limitation from still another point of view, we find it to characterize educational practices. The essential elements of a culture, provincial or national, are shown most clearly in the sort of things taught in the schools, not only public but private. In fact, there is no need for a school system until there is some body of traditions, some set of ideas and "skills" which people want inculcated in their children. So long as civilization is in the pioneer stages there is no great demand for organized education. Such training as seems necessary is received through apprenticeship, and the social virtues are simple enough to be taught largely by example. When schools are established, a part of their duty is to uphold accepted traditions as well as to teach the three R's. The public schools must purvey local, state, regional, and national traditions, the emphasis varying with the locality. The teaching of American history, especially that of the Revolution and the Civil War, varies widely in different sections of the country. The church schools naturally give the place of chief emphasis to doctrinal and moral teaching; the idiom is a sectarian one, and the appeal is to the standard of values set up by the denomination supporting the school. The private schools of England, and some of the academies and colleges of the United States, aim at producing men of a certain pattern to fit into the scheme of the of the upper classes. Such an aim would be preposterous were it not possible and desirable to limit the human outlook in such a manner. Again, the outlook of university people in general,

though not confined to one section or to one country, performs the same function that a purely national or provincial training would perform: it furnishes the basis for a reasoned way of life, and it points out the virtue of a proper circumscription of interest and action.

Class consciousness, once believed to be dying in America because of our rantings in the name of Democracy, has always been one of the important forms of mental and social provincialism. The aristocracy, the middle class, and the proletariat have different pursuits and different outlooks on life. If they ever come together and work in common the incentive will be selfish interest or compulsion of some other sort. Political parties usually take advantage of group interests. The present world-wide wave of proletarianism in its various forms feeds on the private and group desires of its supporters. And, what is very important in the propagation of the movement or in the fighting of it, the leaders realize the necessity for unified thinking and a common background for their followers, and are doing a great deal toward the development of a "proletarian literature", the purpose of which is to appeal to, and to develop still further, the "proletarian ideology".

It is not necessary to point out the weakness which misguided or unguided thought and action lead to. The better minds conform to some scheme of affairs which helps them interpret their surroundings. Even philosophies acknowledge restraining principles. National ideals can usually be summed up in a few outstanding ideas and prejudices. Religions and systems of education find themselves presenting for the most part not world culture or world history or universal conceptions of religion but those of the nation, of the province, or of the sect. Social and economic classes in the same society have their distinguished thoughts and customs, which are in some instances assiduously cultivated. It would seem apparent, then, that the community of interest upon which group action of any sort must be based is of many sorts. A revolution, no less than a school of art, must have its ideology. If we like the spread of an ideology, we call it education; if not, we call it propaganda and try to crush it.

But to return to what we like to think of as the cultural aspects of behavior: if limitation of experience is necessary to an inte-

grated and functioning human system of any sort, then it is high time we Americans were beginning to look about us to see whether we have anything better than materialism, size, physical power, and braggadocio to support a national culture—and, lacking that, to discover the nascent or decadent regional cultures within our borders, to the end that the tapestry of life may be valued not by its width or length, but by its richness in the finer human things and by its strength and lastingness.

*by L. Robert Lind*

### COUNTRY HILLSIDE

O come not hither, heart that stirs no more  
With April down the tempest-gullied furrows,  
Where tremulous wild things will shut a door  
Upon you, and be silent in their burrows.

Here is no one who waits for you; the sun  
Stabs the green earth where winter wheat is lying;  
No voice abroad will call in vain to one  
Who flies not northward, with the blackbird flying.

Go; gather the fruitage of the quickened mind  
In haunts less strange to learning; here the swallow  
Dips to her creek-bank nest; you will not find  
Her secret though you mark, and, stumbling, follow.

Where Spring is moving in the bones of earth,  
Work not the sacrilege of a sightless blunder.  
New flesh of marvel presently comes to birth:  
In this fence-corner stand with me and wonder.



by Frank W. Chandler

## EXPRESSION AND COMMUNICATION

IS communication essential in poetry, or is expression enough? At first blush, it might seem that a poet who cared nothing for communicating his thought and feelings to others had failed in half his duty. But many have claimed for the artist the self-sufficiency of expression. Keats confessed, "I feel assured I should write from the mere yearning and fondness I have for the beautiful even if my night's labors should be burned every morning and no eye ever rest upon them." Goethe was more intent upon ridding himself through art of the tumult of an experience than upon winning public approval. He declared that, once a work of his was complete, he no longer felt any interest in it. Like a serpent that had shed its skin, he went on to live a fresh life indifferent to that remnant of the old. Clive Bell, an advocate of expressionism, maintains that the artist contrives his work, not for its effect upon others, but only for his own esthetic delight. All that he desires is to create significant forms which shall project and relieve his feelings. John Drinkwater, in a university lecture, reprinted in his *Muse in Council*, says that: "The real cause of art is the necessity in the artist for communicating with himself." In short, the poet in creating his line does not think of communicating it to somebody else. He wishes to satisfy the demand of his own mind for the understanding of his experience, or "to make an imperfect experience perfect". And Drinkwater adds: "I believe that in the bringing of this chaos of experience into something like a cosmos in his own mind, the artist . . . has no ulterior purpose whatever. When he is creating, he is not thinking about what his audience is going to say of his work when it is done." Max Eastman, in *The Literary Mind*, thinks that poets, like children, talk to themselves, although they appear to talk with each other. He quotes a French physiologist, Jean Piaget, as saying, "The adult thinks socially even when he is alone, and the child

under seven thinks ego-centrally even in the society of others." Hence Eastman entitles his most illuminating chapter "Poets Talking to Themselves", and he adds that, "Just as the poet uses a listening or the idea of a listener as a mere pretext for speech, so the listener uses the poetry as a pretext . . . for some poem of his own, some inward dwelling upon experience which has a value for him. There is no communication and no demand for communication on either side. But there is an illusion of communication." Benedetto Croce, too, stresses expression rather than communication. Croce makes esthetic experience complete as intuition, and identifies intuition with expression, but employs the latter word quite apart from its usual meaning. For him, expression is a purely inner process and the artist's subsequent production of objective things—a status, a painting, a song, or a poem—is just a practical fact, although without such mechanical externalization, the artist, he admits, cannot create a work of any complexity or even communicate with others.

Opposed to the notion that expression in art is enough, we have the statements of those who insist upon the importance of communication. Thus, Lascelles Abercrombie, in his volume *Towards a Theory of Art*, laughs at the contention that the artist expresses without intending to communicate, "as though the artist were just talking to himself, and we happen along and overhear what he is saying." No, protests Abercrombie, the poet is striving to make his own experience communicable to others. "He does not begin to be an artist until he begins to publish his experience . . . There is no such thing as a private work of art; all art is public property." So W. H. Auden, whose poetry is peculiarly obscure, declares nevertheless that "desire for company" is one of the poet's motives in writing and that "the author who writes simply for himself is a mythical creature who does not exist outside of the text-books of aesthetic theory". So, too, Clutton-Brock, in *The Artist and his Audience*, affirms that: "Art is not merely expression but also a means of address; in fact we do not express ourselves except when we address ourselves to others, even though we speak to no particular or even existing audience . . . Day dreaming is not art because it is addressed to no one, but is a purposeless activity of the mind." In the same vein, Charles H. Cooley,

in *Human Nature and the Social Order*, declares that: "Every one, in proportion to his natural vigor, necessarily strives to communicate to others that part of his life which he is trying to unfold to himself. It is a matter of self-preservation, because without expression thought cannot live . . . The life of the mind is essentially a life of intercourse." According to I. A. Richards, literature is "a verbal communication of values", and "a large part of the distinctive features of the mind are due to its being an instrument for communication. An experience has to be formed, no doubt, before it is communicated, but it takes the form it does largely because it may have to be communicated."

That the artist may not think of communication as a separate issue is no argument against it. He feels that he is making "something which is beautiful in itself, or satisfying to him personally, or something expressive . . . of his emotions or of himself, something personal and individual." He is intent upon getting his work right in itself. Yet, when right, it usually possesses greater communicative power. Richards concludes that "When we find private works of art, works which satisfy the artist, but are incomprehensible to everybody else, so rare, and the publicity of the work so constantly and so intimately bound up with its appeal to the artist himself, it is difficult to believe that efficacy for communication is not a main part of the 'rightness' which the artist may suppose to be something quite different."

For most artists and estheticians, the desire for communication as a supplement to expression seems to be natural and normal. The artist in projecting his Crocean intuition, although for his own satisfaction alone, will attain that satisfaction most fully only if it mean something to others. Moreover, in art, expression and communication are rarely divorced except at the artist's peril. Even a man on a desert island would be likely to combine the two as motives. Yet according to Sir Henry Newbolt such a man would simply dream; he would not execute a work of art, since, says Newbolt, execution follows the dream only when there is intention to produce something of permanence for transmission to others.

Is it not true, however, that Robinson Crusoe, had he been possessed of poetic gifts, might have written verses instead of his

commonplace diary? And, had he done so, would he not have composed from two motives, either as a memorial that might communicate with any who, after his death, should chance upon that island, or as an art-work to satisfy his desire for self-expression, simply to crystallize his thought and feeling in some adequate and enduring form? In the latter case, to be intelligible even to himself he must have used a language developed originally for the transfer of thought and feeling among men of his own race. Hence, with expression as his aim in both cases, the element of communication would also enter in, strongly in the second instance and by implication in the first.

Certainly all language, after the first exclamatory cries of the babe and his mere playful crowing, seeks to communicate. "We get the first approach to language proper," says Otto Jespersen, "when communicativeness takes precedence of exclamativeness, when sounds are uttered in order to 'tell' fellow creatures something, as when birds warn their young ones of some imminent danger." Frederick S. Boas declares that, "All speech is intended to serve for the communication of ideas", and E. Sapir defines language as "a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols". C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, quoting from these two authorities in their *Meaning of Meaning*, add that in language "symbols direct, organize, record and communicate".

## II.

But, although communication be a main purpose of language, no one can perfectly succeed in achieving that purpose. For, in the telegraphic process, the receiver must be considered as well as the sender, and what is said and what is understood depend upon the receiver's range of experience and use of speech as well as the sender's. Obviously, no two receivers will be able to respond in precisely the same fashion, and no two senders will have had just the same experience or will use the symbols of speech in identical ways.

Since words serve as emotive instruments as well as instruments of reference, they connote as well as denote. In philosophical and



scientific writing it is denotation that chiefly counts; in poetic writing it is connotation, the associational and emotive element. But within the realm of poetry itself the pendulum swings now toward emphasis upon denotation, as in classic or pseudo-classic periods, and now toward emphasis upon connotation, as in romantic periods. Among the followers of the Symbolists the latter tendency prevails, and the merit of Pure Poetry is extolled.

For Yeats and George Moore, Pure Poetry means merely that which has been purged of what Yeats calls those "curiosities about science, about history, about religion" which turn attention from beauty. But for the Abbé Bremond or Paul Valéry, Pure Poetry represents a further withdrawal of intellectual elements except such as may be found in music. Valéry has said that: "Everything which makes language more precise, everything which emphasizes its practical character, all the changes which it undergoes in the interests of a more rapid transmission and an easier diffusion, are contrary to its function as a poetic instrument." The Abbé Bremond finds "a mysterious quality residing in words—not in their sound or rhythmical arrangement, still less in their intelligible content", but in the "transforming and unifying action of a mysterious reality that we may call Pure Poetry". In short, skim off the meaning from certain words, and Pure Poetry remains—a power attaching to the words, not as the purveyor of ideas, but intrinsically.

The Hindoos had a theory of Pure Poetry in the ninth century—the so-called Dhvani, forecasting that of the Abbé Brémond. This theory taught that all first-rate literary art contains an "unsaid" meaning which is its "soul" or most important element, that the best literature achieves its end through implication, by conveying a certain feeling, a mood, a temper, eschewing an adjectival description. The true poet knows how to attain his end through this suggestive method; and a connoisseur, a truly sensitive reader, knows how to get this from the poet. Professor Franklin Edgerton of Yale finds a modern example of the theory in a statement by Albert J. Nock to the effect that, "The great literary artist is one who powerfully impresses a reader with an attitude of mind, a mood, a temper, a state of being, without describing it. If he de-

scribes it—if, that is, he anywhere injects himself into the process—the effect is lost.”

This attempt at mystic union through language with the essence of things, has been noted by Irving Babbitt and Julien Benda, and is expressed in characteristic terms by Edouard Le Roy, Bergson's successor at the College de France. Says Le Roy: “Distinctions have disappeared; words no longer have any value. One hears welling forth mysteriously the sources of consciousness like an unseen trickling of living water through the darkness of a moss-grown grotto. I am dissolved in the joy of becoming. I give myself over to the delight of being an ever-streaming reality. I no longer know whether I see perfumes or breathe sounds or taste colors.”

Whether or not we believe that words possess such mystic values, we will agree that the idiom of any art varies from period to period and that it must be learned before appreciation is possible. As Frank Jewett Mather, in his volume *Concerning Beauty* (1935), has explained, it requires time and effort to appreciate more than superficially any work that is rich and complicated, such as an *Antigone* or a *King Lear*, a Sistine ceiling, a Parthenon or Chartres, a “Fifth Symphony” or a *Tristan and Isolde*. So the complaint of Middleton Murry that *The Waste Land* of T. S. Eliot offends against the canon that in poetry “the immediate effect should be unambiguous” is not justified, for, says I. A. Richards, “very much of the best poetry is necessarily ambiguous in its immediate effect.” This ambiguity results from the fact that “An original poem, as much as a new branch of mathematics, compels the mind which receives it to grow, and thus takes time.”

Perhaps all we need is time in order to learn to penetrate the obscurities presented by the new art and poetry, letting them by degrees overcome their reluctance to communicate. Certainly the idiom of art to-day is peculiarly complex, allusive, elusive, and difficult. In writing, the tendency has grown to defy logic, grammar, punctuation, to ignore the sentence as a unit of speech, to coin words or wrench them out of their usual significance, to play with language as a child plays with it, to widen the gap between expression and communication.

Beginning with the French Symbolists, as Julien Benda points

out in *Belphegor*, the referential value of language has been minimized, and its magic has been stressed, with a wistful leaning toward music as something non-representational, mobile, indeterminate, and purely affective. Mallarmé objected that the Parnassians put before us things as they are, thus depriving the mind of the joy of seeming to create. "To name an object," said he, "is to do away with three-fourths of the enjoyment of the poem, which is derived from the satisfaction of guessing little by little; to suggest it, to evoke it—that is what charms the imagination." In *Axel's Castle*, Edmund Wilson, quoting this passage from Mallarmé, notes that, "The symbols of the Symbolist School are usually chosen arbitrarily by the poet to stand for special ideas of his own—they are a sort of disguise for these ideas." And he observes that, "With Symbolism poetry became increasingly a matter of sensations and emotions", and that "Symbolism, indeed, sometimes had the result of making poetry so much a private concern of the poet that it turned out to be incommunicable to the reader."

Eastman remarks the same tendency among the modernist poets of England and America. They would give up interpreting experience and decrease the range, volume, and definiteness of their communications. The titles of poems now tell us what they are not about. So the explanatory notes of T. S. Eliot do not explain, and the intra-verbal punctuations of E. E. Cummings used, according to his admirers, "for the purpose of marking the acceleration and hesitation of the rapid, capricious, and melodic line", utterly confuse all but the initiate. Why not mix Arabic and Chinese and Russian letters with our own and employ a little cross-breeding between plus signs and semi-colons? asks Eastman, who finds that Joyce's experiments in word-creation offers an elementary tongue dance. "To me", he confesses, "reading Joyce's *Work in Progress* is a good deal like chewing gum—it has some flavor at the start, but you soon taste only the motion of your jaws." He concludes that Joyce's most original contribution to English literature has been to "lock up one of its most brilliant geniuses inside of his own vest."

As for Gertrude Stein, part of what she says becomes "as private as the emotional life of the insane". The inmates of asylums write like this: "In space is not quiet it is so likely to be shiny.

Darkness very darkness is sectional. There is a way to see in onion and surely very surely rhubarb and a tomato, surely very surely there is that seeding". In *Tender Buttons* Miss Stein says of custard: "Custard is this. It has aches, aches when. Not to be. Not to be narrowly. This makes a whole little bill. It is better than a little thing that has mellow real mellow. It is better than lakes whole lakes, it is better than seeing." Even the generous Edmund Wilson is forced to confess that in *The Making of Americans* she reveals "a sort of fatty degeneration of her imagination and style" and that "Most of what Miss Stein publishes nowadays must apparently remain absolutely unintelligible even to a sympathetic reader. She has outdistanced any of the symbolists in using words for pure purposes of suggestion—she has gone so far that she no longer even suggests. We see the ripples expanding in her consciousness, but we are no longer supplied with any clue as to what kind of object has sunk there."

Among recent books in English that deal with the problem of expression and communication, the best are Edward F. Rothschild's *The Meaning of Unintelligibility in Modern Art* and John Sparrow's *Sense and Poetry*, both of 1934. The former attempts to justify and explain what to the common man may seem the madness of certain poets and artists; the latter, in brief but piquant extracts, presents such aberrations on the part of poets alone and traces the development of their doctrine, principally to condemn it. He laments that modern writers have, in Burke's phrase, "subtilized themselves into savages by their renunciation of the intellect."

Unintelligibility, for Rothschild, is a value that we have hitherto underestimated. "Distortion, eccentricity, grotesqueness, fantasy, are all values," he declares, and their increasing use in art is due to three tendencies—that toward revolt, that toward individualism, and that toward dematerialization. In explaining these tendencies he describes the movement from Impressionism to Expressionism, from Symbolism to Surrealism as a drift toward unintelligibility. He finds in jazz the organic, animal, primitive asserting itself against the domination of the mechanical and standardized, and in nonsense a super-rational value. "It has something frank, sincere, and fresh about it", he says, "and, above



all, it represents one level on which we can all be free and equal and even fraternal." He is tolerant even of Dadaism, admitting that "Its order is only disorder when you are outside looking in", but that "When you are inside looking out, what is disorder has become order and what was order has become disorder . . . Since there is no reason in Dadaist art, there can be no intelligibility." As for dematerialization, our scientific mysticism finds matter just a form of energy, psychic phenomena insubstantial, dynamic, and often capricious, and each mind a world in flux that posits for itself the non-ego. Apparently each of these bewildered minds is endeavoring to express itself in what Rothschild calls "the profound and intuitive terms of ineffable wonder"; but most of them, because of their anti-literal medium, are not communicative. Perhaps the fault is ours, perhaps it is theirs.

### III.

At all events, in the failure of the new art to communicate lies a danger. For art, as Ruskin and Dewey have contended, is an activity in which there are two partners, and in which the activity of each is modified and regulated by that partnership. The prosperity of a jest, according to Shakespeare, lies in the ear of him who hears it; but in decadent art nobody except the jester can understand his jest, and whoever hears it will laugh merely because, in perceiving that the jester too is laughing, he draws from his own world something in which he also can find mirth. Yet only at his peril may the poet dispense with the endeavor to communicate. As the barrier between him and his hearers rises, cutting off adequate communication, the poet will grow more and more isolated and arbitrary in expression, finding, as Rimbaud said, the disorder of his own spirit sacred, and his hearers will more and more be left to themselves. They must either pretend a response for the sake of seeming intelligent, or else generate a response—however irrelevant—out of their own private experience.

Although neither expression nor communication can ever be complete, they both attain to relative clarity and precision in classical periods, whereas in romantic periods they both are confessedly imperfect and suggestive. In decadent art, however, the

two fall apart, expression becoming arbitrary and individual, and communication becoming just the chance incitement of egocentric in others. In such art, there is a reversion to the primitive and infantile. Since this is the case, let us seek light upon the new poetry by considering for a moment the language of the child. A recognized authority, Otto Jespersen, in his *Language: Its Nature, Development, and Origin*, 1921, holds that the child's linguistic development covers three periods: the screaming time, the crowing or babbling time, and the talking time. The last begins with the child's "little language" made by imperfect imitation of the language of its elders. Here speech becomes more regular but contains confusions like the word "pillarcats" for caterpillar and "ephelant" for elephant. Earlier, in the babbling time, to which our poets are apparently reverting, the child utters meaningless sounds and series of sounds just as a delightful exercise. "Although we now regard the communication of thought as the main object of speaking," says Jespersen, "there is no reason for thinking that this has always been the case; it is perfectly possible that speech has developed from something which had no other purpose than that of exercising the muscles of the mouth and throat, and of amusing oneself and others by the production of pleasant or possibly only strange sounds." As for the child's first vocal expression, it is a scream, not uttered "primarily as a means of conveying anything to others, and so far . . . not properly to be called speech", although an elder may infer from the scream some need or fear, and the scream, at first a reflex action, may become voluntary whenever the babe discovers that it brings aid.

Somewhere in the babbling stage the child begins to seek meanings in sound, communicativeness supplementing exclamativeness. But long after it has learned to talk its "little language" and then the language of its elders, it may enjoy making meaningless sounds, and older children will deliberately invent and use secret languages.

What has happened to certain of our poets now becomes clear. In the process of reversion toward the primitive and infantile, they have gone back to second childhood, to talk a secret language or a "little language" allied to our mature speech, yet departing from it in meanings, sounds, and syntax; and some of them have gone back still farther to the stage of babbling, or

producing strange or pleasant sounds that merely exercise the vocal organs or the listening ear but convey nothing to their fellows. Such poets are really completing a cycle begun in the cradle and leading back to the cradle. In this cycle, those who at present only babble and crow may ere long begin to scream. But who will heed their screaming?

*by James Still*

### ON TROUBLESOME CREEK

These people here were born for mottled hills,  
The narrow trails, the creekbed roads  
Quilting dark ridges and pennyroyal valleys.  
Where Troublesome gathers forked waters  
Into one strong body they have come down  
To push the hills away, to shape sawn timbers  
Into homeseats, to heap firm stones into chimneys  
And rear their young before splendid fires.

And Troublesome floods with Spring's dark waters,  
Drys to sand in Summer, and purple martins  
Flock to poled gourds, moulting stained feathers  
Which fall like blackened snow on clapboard roofs  
Of hill townsmen biding eternal time.  
And men here wait as mountains long have waited.

by Harvey Eagleson

## GERTRUDE STEIN: METHOD IN MADNESS

Those who are creating the modern composition authentically are naturally only of importance when they are dead because by that time the modern composition having become past is classified and the description of it is classical.

GERTRUDE STEIN.

### I.

ONE of the most curious phenomena of modern literary history is the reputation of Gertrude Stein. It has long been known that William James considered her his most brilliant woman student, that she is an intimate friend of the great English scientist-philosopher, Whitehead, that she was one of the first to appreciate the work of Picasso, Matisse, and their school of artists and to collect their paintings before it was "the thing" to do. It is known that her ideas and her compositions have had an extensive influence on such diverse writers as Sherwood Anderson, Ernest Hemingway, Scott Fitzgerald, and Bernard Fay. For years her name has been almost a household word, so well known that newspaper columnists could allude to her, make jokes about her, and feel confident that their thousands of readers would recognize their allusions and appreciate their jokes. Yet none of the leading publishers would publish her books, and very few persons read what poetry and prose of hers found its way into print in the esoteric magazines of small cults or from the presses of obscure publishers.

Then in 1933 Miss Stein's autobiography, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, appeared. It became a best seller. The Modern Library brought out her early work, *Three Lives*; *The Making of Americans*, twenty-six years after she had finished writing it, appeared in a trade edition; her opera, *Four Saints in Three Acts*, was produced on Broadway with popular success; *Time* published her portrait on its cover; *Vaintry Fair* honored her



with a cartoon in color as its frontispiece. The magazines bristled with reviews, reviews that for the most part discussed her work with little seriousness. Most reviewers, like Clifton Fadiman in *The New Yorker*, took the publication of her books as an occasion for making "wise-cracking" remarks at her expense. Except for an occasional essay in those esoteric magazines, an article by Sherwood Anderson, and a chapter in Edmund Wilson's *Axel's Castle*, no serious study of her work has appeared.

But Miss Stein and her work are not jokes. One may like or dislike her writing, one may consider it too obscure to be artistically sound, one may be bored by her endless repetition and her monotonous rhythms, one may judge rightly that her work will never be widely read, but her influence on the arts, both graphic and literary, has been too great and too extensive for her work to be overlooked by the critic and the historian treating our period, or to be dismissed with a casual wave of the hand as semi-humorous nonsense, beneath contempt. As Edmund Wilson wrote, "one should not talk about 'nonsense' until one has decided what sense consists of." "Would it not be a lovely and charmingly ironic gesture of the gods if, in the end, the work of this artist were to prove the most lasting and important of all the word slingers of our generation!" wrote Sherwood Anderson in his introduction to *Geography and Plays*.

## II.

Miss Stein states her artistic credo thus:

Gertrude Stein, in her work, has always been possessed by the intellectual passion for exactitude in the description of inner and outer reality. She has produced a simplification by this concentration, and as a result the destruction of associational emotion in poetry and prose. She knows that beauty, music, decoration, the result of emotion should never be the cause, even events should not be the cause of poetry or prose. They should consist of an exact reproduction of either an outer or an inner reality.<sup>1</sup>

She does not believe, in spite of her reputation to the contrary, that Art is esoteric, Art's for Art's sake, a thing removed from life having no practical function.

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<sup>1</sup>*Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas.*

... for it is a strange feeling one has in one's later living, when one finds the story-books really have truth in them, for one loved the story-books earlier, one loved to read them but one never really believed there was truth in them, and later when one by living has gained a new illusion and a kind of wisdom, and one reads again in them, there it is, the thing we have learned since to believe in, there it is and we know then that the man or the woman who wrote them had just the same kind of wisdom in them we have been spending our lives winning, and this shows to any one wise in learning that no young people can learn wisdom from the talking of the older ones around them. If they cannot believe the things they read in the story-books where it is all made life-like, real and interesting for them, how should they ever learn things from older people's talking. It's foolish to expect such things of them. No let them read the story-books we write for them, they don't learn much, to be sure, but more than they can from their fathers', mothers', aunts' and uncles' talking. Yes from their fathers' and their mothers' living they can get some wisdom, yes supply them with a tradition by your lives, you grown men and women, and for the rest let them come to us for their teaching.<sup>1</sup>

Like the great German novelist, Thomas Mann, she believes that man in his most normal and characteristic manifestation is to be found in the great middle class. It is the real core, the heart and fibre of humanity. Know the middle class and you know man. The aristocracy, both intellectual and social, and the proletariat are but excrescences, the more-or-less lunatic fringe.

She always says that she is very grateful not to have been born of an intellectual family, she has a horror of what she calls intellectual people.<sup>2</sup>

I have it, this interest in ordinary middle class existence, in simple firm ordinary middle class traditions, in sordid material unaspiring visions, in a repeating, common, decent enough kind of living, with no fine kind of fancy ways inside us, no excitements to surprise us, no new ways of being bad or good to win us . . .

Middle-class, middle-class, I know no one of my friends who will admit it, one can find no one among you all to belong to it, I know that here we are to be democratic and aristocratic and not have it, for middle class is sordid material unil-

<sup>1</sup>*Making of Americans.*

<sup>2</sup>*Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas.*

lusioned unaspiring and always monotonous for it is always there and to be always repeated, and yet I am strong, and I am right, and I know it, and I say it to you and you are to listen to it, yes here in the heart of a people who despise it, that a material middle class who know they are it, with their straightened bond of family to control it, is the one thing always human, vital, and worthy it—worthy that all monotonously shall repeat it,—and from which has always sprung, and all who really look can see it, the very best the world can ever know, and everywhere we always need it.<sup>4</sup>

Except for the "portraits" of her friends, Miss Stein's work generally deals with the ordinary matters of life, the ordinary people in life, in the language and words of those people. The first and most essential step in an approach to an understanding of Gertrude Stein's work is to read it aloud. Only in that way can one realize the rhythms and sounds which are an integral part of her work. They are the rhythms of America, of American speech. Only in that way can one understand Miss Stein's peculiar punctuation, for she places marks of punctuation not where they should be placed to indicate syntactical pauses, but where they indicate speech pauses, American speech pauses. *Three Lives* and *The Making of Americans* sound like America talking, America talking after supper on summer evenings as it sits in rocking chairs on front porches, America gossiping over back fences. The long, involved, repetitious sentences, the characteristic grammatical errors, split infinitives, dangling pronouns, the idiomatic phrases of American speech are all there.

### III.

Repetition in the work of Gertrude Stein, however, is not simply a rhythmic device, a symphonic *leitmotif*. More profoundly it is an attempt to express an intricate and difficult philosophical idea. Miss Stein, like Carlyle before her and Einstein with her, is concerned with the problem of Time, "the continuous present" as she phrases it. Time is divided into three parts, the past, the present, and the future, but of these three the only one which can be said to exist in actuality is the present. The past, which was once the present, no longer exists except as it remains

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<sup>4</sup>*Making of Americans.*

in the present as memory, and the future will not exist until it becomes the present. Composition to have any validity either to contemporaries or to posterity must be a presentation, "using everything" of the present, but as the present instantaneously becomes the past and as "naturally one does not know how it happened until it is well over beginning happening", a presentation of the present involves a continuous "beginning again", that is, repetition.

But that is not all. The problem is still further complicated by the necessity of "using everything". While the past and the future may be said to be non-existent as separate entities, elements of both do exist in the present. From the point of view of behavioristic psychology the full explanation of any individual's environment involves, if carried to its logical conclusion, not only an analysis of all mankind but of the cosmos as well, that is, "everything". It is the same problem which Tennyson stated succinctly in *Flower in the Crannied Wall*.

Little flower—but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is.

If we could know *all* about one single thing we would know *all* about the universe. It is an attempt, then, to express this idea which has produced what Margaret Anderson calls Gertrude Stein's "house-that-Jack-built style". To give a story the atmosphere of the "continuous present . . . using everything", it is theoretically necessary to repeat each outstanding characteristic of a character each time that character faces a new situation, however slight, because the manner in which the character deals with the situation arises from these outstanding and ever-present characteristics. What is more, the future can be said to exist also in this present because these same conditioning factors will function similarly when situations come from the future into the present. In a way they may be said to predetermine the future. Naturally this repetition must become more frequent in proportion to the increased complexity of the character and the greater subtlety of the psychological analysis. It is all this that Miss Stein attempts to express by the stylistic device of repetition.

And there is more. She believes that each individual is a con-



glomerate of given characteristics and, moving through life, he merely repeats himself. "Always from the beginning there was to me all living as repeating." Meeting an individual for the first time, one observes only the constantly repeated surface characteristics. At first one does not "hear" the repeatings which arise from "bottom being", the inner depths of character, and until one can "hear" these repeatings as well as those on the surface, the individual must remain for the observer a fragmentary or erroneously conceived personality, not a "whole one".

As I was saying learning, thinking, living in the beginning of being men and women often has in it very little of real being. Real being, the bottom nature, often does not then in the beginning do very loud repeating. Learning, thinking, talking, living, often then is not of the real bottom being. Some are this way all their living. Some slowly come to be repeating louder and more clearly the bottom being that makes them. Listening to repeating, knowing being in every one who ever was or is or will be living slowly came to be in me a louder and louder pounding. Now I have it to my feeling to feel all living, to be always listening to the slightest changing, to have each one come to be a whole one to me from the repeating in each one that sometime I come to be understanding. Listening to repeating is often irritating, listening to repeating can be dulling, always repeating is all of living, everything in a being is always repeating, always more and more listening to repeating gives to me completed understanding. Each one slowly comes to be a whole one to me. Each one slowly comes to be a whole one in me.\*

In sorting out, classifying, recognizing, and building into wholes these "repeatings" one is aided by the factor of universality. Miss Stein believes in a fundamental unity in the cosmos.

The only thing that is different from one time to another is what is seen and what is seen depends upon how everybody is doing everything. This makes the thing we are looking at very different and this makes what those who describe it make of it, it makes a composition, it confuses, it shows, it is, it looks, it likes it as it is, and this makes what is seen as it is seen. Nothing changes from generation to generation except the thing seen and that makes a composition . . . Each period

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\**Making of Americans.*

of living differs from any other period of living not in the way life is but in the way life is conducted . . .<sup>6</sup>

With eggs, butter, milk, sugar, and flour, one can make several different kinds of cake by proportioning the ingredients differently, yet each cake still retains some of the original materials, eggs, butter, milk, sugar, flour. So with man. There are a certain number of elements in nature which mixed in different proportions in men differentiate one from one's fellow but leave a fundamental commonality.

Every one then is an individual being. Every one then is like many others always living . . .

Every one is one inside them, every one reminds some one of some other one who is or was or will be living. Every one has it to say of each one he is like such a one I see it in him, every one has it to say of each one she is like some one else I can tell by remembering. So it goes on always in living, every one is always remembering some one who is resembling to the one at whom they are then looking. So they go on repeating, every one is themselves inside them and every one is resembling to others . . . Slowly then all the resemblances between one and all the others that have something, different things in common with that one, all these fall into an ordered system sometime then that one is a whole one, sometimes that one is very different to what was in the beginning the important resemblance in that one but always everything, all resemblances in that one must be counted in, nothing must ever be thrown out, everything in each one must be included to know that one and then sometime that one is to some one a whole one and that is very satisfying.<sup>7</sup>

Consoling as the thought of man's common humanity may be, man is nevertheless not free from tragedy. Like Conrad, Miss Stein believes that man "from the cradle to the grave and perhaps beyond" is alone. Complete understanding of each other or even of one's self is not given us. Because that understanding is lacking, misunderstanding, confusion, cruelty, and tragedy occur.

So then this is certain that each one is to some one for all of the living ever in that one a child, to some one, a baby, to some one an older one, to some one, a middle aged one, to

<sup>6</sup>*Composition as Explanation.*

<sup>7</sup>*Making of Americans.*

some one, an old one, to some one. I am not saying that not any one can be feeling more than one stage of being in themselves, in any other one, but I am really almost saying this thing. It is an interesting thing that each one in a way is feeling the world being existing in this kind of way too in them. Those feeling the world an old thing are only feeling this thing, those feeling the world a new thing are only feeling this thing, those feeling the world to be having had a past living are only feeling it as a thing having description and so on and so on and it is extraordinary how not any one can be convinced in telling about one being a young man if they are feeling the living being in that one being that of an old one. Mostly every one is in some place in being living to every one knowing that one and that is the complete realisation that each one is having of that one.\*

To Conrad, the best way to overcome this tragedy inherent in life was for men to stand together, present a unified front to an antithetical universe, to struggle futilely but gloriously against odds which could not be overcome. To Miss Stein the solution is emotional control attained through morality. The object of life is not happiness but the dignity which comes from "feeling the sadness of pain."

It is the french habit in thinking to consider that in the grouping of two and an extra it is the two that get something from it all who are of importance and whose claim should be considered; the american mind accustomed to waste happiness and be reckless of joy finds morality more important than ecstasy and the lonely extra of more value than the happy two. To our new world feeling the sadness of pain has more dignity than the beauty of joy.\*

All this, too, Miss Stein attempts to express by the device of repetition.

These are the reasons for Miss Stein's use of repetition. The artistic effectiveness of it is another matter. Margaret Anderson has stated the usual and the not unintelligent reaction to this device when she says

I like it when she says "a woman who had not any kind of an important feeling to herself inside her." This seems to

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\**Making of Americans.*

\**Making of Americans.*

me interesting and important material. But when, in a book of six hundred thousand words like "The Making of Americans", she repeats this description every time the character appears—which is probably six hundred times—I find the system uninteresting. I don't deny that it gives weight, but to me it is the weight of boredom.<sup>20</sup>

Miss Stein, engrossed in stating her ideas fully, in carrying her thesis to its logical conclusion, has suffered the fate of most innovators. In stressing the idea she has fallen short of art. To be clear she must be complete, and completeness is seldom art. As has been many times pointed out, art is a matter of omission rather than commission. James Joyce, one of the greatest innovators of our, or any other time, produced an astonishing technical *tour de force* in his *Ulysses*, but Virginia Wolfe, using his technique with omissions produced a much greater work of art in *Mrs. Dalloway*. To Joyce belongs the credit for the idea, but to Mrs. Wolfe belongs the credit for the work of art. To Miss Stein belongs the idea, but to someone else will probably belong the work of art.

#### IV.

It may be objected that so far in this essay I have dealt only with Miss Stein's early work and that it is with her later, more incomprehensible, writings that her popular reputation is associated. True enough, Her early work, like the early work of Henry James or James Joyce, is "easier", but her later work is not, given a key, completely beyond interpretation though there are fundamental difficulties in that interpretation which must baffle Miss Stein's most sympathetic follower and in which lies the great artistic weakness of her work. Turn, then, to *Four Saints in Three Acts*.

The thesis, advanced even by Mr. Carl Van Vechten who writes the introduction to the printed libretto, that the entire opera is pure sound and very little sense arises, I am afraid, not so much from Miss Stein's obscurity as from an ignorance of the lives of Saint Therese of Avila and Saint Ignatius. I do not wish to maintain that all the lines in the libretto make sense. "Let Lucy Lily

<sup>20</sup>My *Thirty Years War*.



Lily Lucy Lucy let Lucy Lucy Lily Lily Lily Lily let Lily Lucy Lucy let Lily", is merely a rhythmic sound pattern. But Miss Stein was not writing a play. She was writing the libretto for an opera, and in an opera sound, musical sound, not sense is the primary object. These lily-lucy passages are not the whole opera, however. They are but the embroideries on a firm fabric of sense.

Saint Therese was a great mystic, but she was also a great organizer, and she managed her temporal affairs with no little worldly acumen. In spite of opposition she founded an order, and at her death left behind her sixteen convents and fourteen monasteries which her energy had created. Within her struggled always two natures, the spiritual and the worldly. She did not teach asceticism or flagellation for others, but she practised them herself for she knew that the flesh cried out within her. It is this struggle which Miss Stein symbolizes by Saint Therese I and Saint Therese II, which she states in the heading for Act I, "Avila: St. Therese half indoors and half out out of doors", and in lines like, "Leave later gaily the troubadour plays his guitar", and, using a Biblical reference, "Saint Therese might it be Martha", or again in the longer passage

There can be no peace on earth with calm with calm. There can be no peace on earth with calm with calm. There can be no peace on earth with calm with calm and with whom whose with calm and with whom whose when they well they well they call it there made message especial and come.

This amounts to Saint Therese. Saint Therese has been and has been.

Saint Therese with all her mysticism was not interested in medieval scholasticism. She had no concern with questions such as, How many angels could dance on the point of a needle? So in Miss Stein's opera when Saint Therese is asked a modern scholastic question, "If it were possible to kill five thousand chinamen by pressing a button would it be done" the reply is "Saint Therese not interested."

Again, take the much quoted Act III, Scene II.

Pigeons on the grass alas.

Pigeons on the grass alas.

Short longer grass short longer longer shorter yellow grass.

Pigeons large pigeons on the shorter longer yellow grass alas pigeons on the grass.

If they were not pigeons what were they.

If they were not pigeons on the grass alas what were they. He had heard of a third and he asked about it it was a magpie in the sky. If a magpie in the sky on the sky can not cry if the pigeon on the grass alas can alas and to pass the pigeon on the grass alas and the magpie in the sky on the sky and to try and to try alas on the grass alas the pigeon on the grass the pigeon on the grass and alas. They might be very well very well very well they might be they might be very well they might be very well very well they might be.

Saint Ignatius believed he had a vision of the Holy Ghost descending in the form of a pigeon. In this scene the characters skeptically protest his pronouncement in language which is a broad burlesque of the silly repetitions in the words of a Händel oratorio. How did Saint Ignatius know it was the Holy Ghost and not just a pigeon? How could he distinguish between the Holy Ghost as a pigeon and just a pigeon? And if the pigeon he saw was different from other pigeons, must it even then of necessity have been the Holy Ghost? Might it not have been a magpie? The friends of Saint Ignatius feel that he is not doing himself and his cause any good by insisting people should credit his vision. He himself in his own life and character is sufficient argument for his cause without bringing in the questionably supernatural to complicate matters. "He asked for a distant magpie as if they made a difference." As Saint Chavez very sensibly remarks a little later, "Saint Ignatius might be admired for himself alone and because of that it might be as much as any one could desire."

One might go further and multiply these illustrations, but it seems unnecessary here. I have given enough to demonstrate that curious and unfamiliar as Miss Stein's language forms may be, they nevertheless convey ideas and are not all nonsense. With a knowledge of the lives and legends of Saint Therese and Saint Ignatius one can explain the libretto for one's self. And in that statement is implied the artistic fallacy of Gertrude Stein's work as art. Without a knowledge of Saint Therese and Saint Ignatius, *Four Saints in Three Acts* is incomprehensible. Miss Stein herself gives us no help or explanation. In other words, *Four Saints in*

*Three Acts* cannot stand alone as a work of art. It is incomplete. It must be supplemented. It is dependent on a second thing, knowledge of Saint Therese, for its realization. It is true that it is the artist's privilege to demand certain knowledge on the part of his audience for full appreciation of his work, but he should not demand knowledge before there can be *any* appreciation of his work. A knowledge of its harmonic structure increases one's pleasure in a Bach fugue, but it is not essential before one can derive any aesthetic experience whatsoever from the music. As Albert Sterner expressed it in a recent essay, "... the main purpose of all creative artists is the same one, *viz.* the lucid statement, the concrete presentation, of a *human emotional* message within the technical limitations of his chosen medium."<sup>11</sup> The "lucid statement", the factor of communication which must exist in all art if an object is to be worthy of that classification, has been completely disregarded by Miss Stein.

Take for example her portrait, *Mrs Whitehead*, of which I quote only the beginning.

But you like it.

They can't any of them be quite as bad because they learned french but I never did.

He doesn't look dead at all.

The wind might have blown him.

He comes from that direction. That's the way.

They are not knotted. Have you smelt it. What would you suggest your advice I have come across three or four.

So they are the others.

Separate them.

It does make one come, he is extraordinarily charming and endearing once of twice only twice I think.

He is not saying out that's hard beside that what does he do.

That's long for his mother.

She travelled from this rest. She crocheted from this nest.

She crocheted from this nest. I thought it wasn't ever.

It's one of my favorite ones this.

And yet not this.

Isn't it funny.

It isn't."

<sup>11</sup>"The Cézanne Myth", *Harpers Magazine*, May, 1933.

<sup>12</sup>*Geography and Plays*.

This appears to be a pasticcio of phrases from Mrs. Whitehead's conversation. As one reads the portrait one gains the impression of a kindly, talkative woman, domestic and motherly, concerned with the commonplaces of household life. But that is all. Unlike the passages I have cited from *Four Saints in Three Acts*, the portrait gives only an impression. It conveys no "sense". For the portrait to make sense, the reader would have to know Mrs. Whitehead, and Mrs. Whitehead not being an historical figure like Saint Therese, it is impossible to know her, for she does not exist for us in books of ready reference. The portrait must therefore remain forever a vague impression.

Miss Stein might argue in her own defense that the vague impression is all she desires to give. A great deal of her work is intended to do just that, to be only words disassociated from meaning and arranged in patterns for the sake of creating an impression. The theory is interesting, but the practice is illogical. The impression must be, naturally, that of the artist who creates it or of a character into whom the artist has projected himself. To appreciate it the observer must be able to receive the same impression as the artist or his character, and if the factor of communication is neglected, this is impossible of accomplishment. The impression has no meaning except for the artist. Some extremists of Miss Stein's school would argue that it need not have. They carry the old slogan, Art for Art's sake, one step further and make it Art for the Artist's sake. That, too, may be justifiable to a certain point. Each of us can store up his impressions, turn them over, inspect them, enjoy them, but the moment these impressions are recorded, no matter in what form, music, literature, painting, they cease to be art for the artist's sake. Except for the purpose of communication there is no logical reason for the artist to record an impression which already exists for his own enjoyment in his own mind. If he records it, he is illogical and silly, because he is thwarting his own purpose when he neglects the factor of communication.

It is into this illogical blind alley that Miss Stein's interest in technique has led her. Her writing as a whole is like a splendid workshop. The tools are all there, sharpened, polished, arranged in shining order, but that is all. The work of art they were to



make is missing, and one feels inclined to exclaim with Othello, "O, Iago, the pity of it, Iago!", for Miss Stein is unquestionably one of the great feminine minds of our time. She has a shrewdness of observation, a satiric and at the same time sympathetic humor, and a philosophical profundity that is unexcelled by any other modern writer. In a book like *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* she has shown us what she might do if she would. The *Autobiography* is one of the cleverest, most subtly comic books in our time. Instead of writing a conventional autobiography Miss Stein chose to present herself as seen through the eyes of a pleasant, gentle, interested, but decidedly naïve individual, her companion, Alice B. Toklas. The problem of the book was a difficult one. Miss Stein had to project herself into the character of Miss Toklas and write as she would write, or talk, observe as she would observe a sophisticated society which is perfectly comprehensible to Miss Stein but obviously not quite comprehensible to Miss Toklas, and at the same time make comprehensible to the reader what was not comprehensible to Miss Toklas without stepping out of the assumed character of Miss Toklas. That Miss Stein accomplished this feat brilliantly the *Autobiography* is evidence. The book is a unique work of art. But alas, too little of Miss Stein's work falls into that classification. That posterity and literary historians will remember her is a foregone conclusion, for while she may neglect to use her tools herself, others who come after her undoubtedly will use them, and her influence may be far reaching. But posterity will remember her as a great technician, not as a great artist. Gertrude Stein is a monumental tool-maker—pigeons on the grass alas—no more.

*by Fay P. LeCompte*

## NIGHT IN GETHSEMANE

As Judas knew it must be done,  
He kissed the cheek of Mary's Son.

Jesus breathed with calm delight  
The thickened fragrance of the night.

James stood confused within the rush,  
The torches, and the sudden hush;

The heavy tension weighed upon  
The hot and troubled heart of John;

But angry Peter drew his sword  
And cut an ear off for his Lord.

The soldiers grew profane and loud,  
And dragged the Man into the crowd

From out the quiet garden air  
For mystery abided there.

They passed by Matthew and the rest  
Who waited nervously oppressed

By some wild fear lest He should not  
Set free Himself from Iscariot.

But soon the stillness of the night  
Came back, and He was out of sight.

Then each one saw his own surmise  
Distorted in the others' eyes,

While overhead the hyssop bloom  
Was stirring vaguely in the gloom.

*by Brinkerhoff Jackson*

## MODERNISM IN ARCHITECTURE

ROCKFELLER CENTER

ONE of the peculiar features of the current critical enthusiasm for Modernist architecture is the general lack of interest in the architect himself. It is not that his name is unknown, or his rôle is unappreciated; but as a personality he remains to all intents and purposes uninvestigated and anonymous. It is true that the last generation was equally in the dark; but then it is generally agreed that the last generation knew far less than was advisable in many respects; it knew just as little about the men who painted its pictures and wrote its books as it did about the men who built the houses. Criticism then was impersonal and strictly esthetic, and it occurred to no one to analyze the character of the artist along with that of his work. If it was a scruple which dictated this attitude it was one which the present has managed to discard, for modern criticism begins when previous criticism left off. A contemporary experimenter in the field of painting or writing may justifiably feel neglected if his innovations fail to attract the attention of a psychiatrist, and the last essence of their meaning extracted by a highly scientific process. Alone among artists, the architect is excluded from this treatment, and it would be natural for him, if he is constituted like his brethren, to resent the oversight as a loss of valuable publicity.

The discrimination does indeed seem unjust, if it takes the ingenuity of an expert psychologist to understand other forms of modern art, why does no psychologist see fit to investigate the mother of all arts? If the subconscious of Dali or Gertrude Stein is worth probing why is the subconscious of Le Corbusier or of Frank Lloyd Wright any less edifying? I suspect the reason for this favoritism is a relatively simple one: modernist architecture has emerged so suddenly on the American landscape that it has caught the critics napping, temporarily at a loss to know how to

deal with the complex subject. They have been forced thereby to take the architect's word as to his artistic intent, or to talk portentously about that small fraction of his work that they understand, how it impresses them at first glance, or how it is constructed. Thus it was the fashion a few years ago to rhapsodize about the "soaring and breath-taking towers, glittering in the sunlight of the New World Democracy, bidding proud defiance of European senility" and so on. That mood has passed, and now we are treated to such erudite criticism as "the use of ferro-concrete and the adoption of a specifically organic plan combine to achieve a functional unit of distinction, a technical triumph of utility, articulated in forms at once beautiful and severe". Both of these methods may be first-rate in their way, but it is a way that tells us nothing about the architect and how he thinks. Nor is it much more enlightening to accept the artist's own explanation, which is likely to be incomplete and somewhat superficial. When he declares that he is about to design a strictly functional building without any traditional forms, it will not really do to judge the product in that light and to say no more about it; what we should search for is the architect's subconscious reasons for designing as he did. There are a good many writers and painters who maintain that they are expressing themselves in a straightforward and untraditional manner; yet no critic would consider himself worth his salt if he let their work go by without subjecting it to an analysis; if he said in effect, "Mr. Hemingway has set out to write a story about bull-fighting and has succeeded very well". By the same token no critic of architecture should say "Gropius has set out to design a functional department store and has done so, admirably". We are schooled to better and more searching criticism than that. In the first place, it is not true that any architect ever set out to design a strictly utilitarian structure and ignored all his artistic instincts; and secondly, if he persists in claiming that he did, then that is all the more reason for investigating his subconscious.

Whoever undertakes to do so will find it well worth the trouble. The functionalist architect is the only artist who consistently denies his identity, who is actually ashamed of his calling. Others may sell their talents to political causes, but none of them ever tries to pass as anything than what he is. The architect is eager



to masquerade as a realtor or a sociologist or a regional planner or an engineer, to disown his art for the sake of being up-to-date. You will have some difficulty in finding a painter who decries the best traditions of his craft and voluntarily classifies himself with sign-painters and commercial artists; you will not easily meet with a writer who considers illiteracy and bad journalism his ideal; but you will have no difficulty at all in finding an architect who scorns all the great masters of his art as frauds or bunglers, and who professes the heartiest admiration for the village carpenter and craftsman. When an entire profession of otherwise sane men labor under a delusion as enormous as this I confess I cannot understand the reluctance of the psychiatrists to plunge in and explain the matter.

The task is certainly too great for any lay critic to tackle; and he would not dare trespass at all were it not for the fact that the field of investigation is boundless, and that as yet no one has an exclusive occupancy of it. To the proper authorities we may leave the agreeable and absorbing occupation of explaining the subconscious attitude of the Modernist architect toward sex, art, and the Life Hereafter, by means of a study of his preference or avoidance of certain basic elements of his art. Such things about the architect can and will be learned—and learned no doubt very easily—for all architects work with the same elements, and the individual use of them must of necessity have a significance which we do not as yet understand or appreciate. We must at present confine ourselves, however, to the simplest and most obvious sort of interpretation, discovering as best we can how the Modernist architect unconsciously expresses his social and ethical views through his work.

## II.

We may take Rockefeller Center as an example of the Modernist architect's work to scrutinize. It is not the best example of the style to be found, and it is certainly not the most advanced; there are many who will not consider it Modernist at all. But for our purpose it will do, and in spite of many features peculiar to itself it is a typical specimen of a certain school of Modernism in this country. Looking at Rockefeller Center we see before us a group of buildings severe in design, clear-cut in silhouette and mass, and

easily understandable; that is to say, without surprises or inexplicable features. Each unit is simple, simpler by far than the simplest gothic tower; and in this whole connection St. Patrick's across the street serves as an excellent contrast.

The ornamentation on Radio City, huge as it appears from the street, is actually insignificant and unnoticeable in relation to the whole; the sculptures and reliefs are even carefully framed and isolated so that they will not interfere with the predominant simplicity. Nowhere are there columns or pilasters or moulding, and there is no façade treatment whatsoever—no one side, that is to say, which is more ornate than the other three. It happens that the entrance to Radio City faces toward Fifth Avenue and is preceded by the sunken court with its lamentable sculpture, and that the entrance itself is graced by a relief of Moses with a compass in his hand. But the rest of that side of the tower is plain, and identical in treatment with the other three. It is the façade only in so far as it is the entrance side. Only of the French and British buildings can it be said that there is anything like a full façade treatment. One's first impression of the buildings, considering their immensity, their cost, their cultural pretentiousness, must be that they are remarkably modest and uninspired; and that is the first clue; this architecture, in spite of its scale, is unassuming, middle class in the best sense—"without front"—an obvious sort of analogy to be sure, but (one hopes) nonetheless sound on that account.

The second impression is this: the group is rational and practical—I speak of the exterior architecture, not of the enterprise as a whole. Nowhere has light or air been sacrificed for artistic effect; windows are all of the same size and disposition, the storeys of the same height, even if the effect is monotonous. There are no dark shafts, or overhanging cornices. The roofs are flat, without turret or gable, even without that most desirable of skyscraper adjuncts: a dirigible mooring mast. Radio City is an office building, and it does not pretend to be anything else. Perfectly frank in this respect, it resists the temptation, succumbed to by the Chrysler Tower, the Daily News Building, and the American Radiator Building, to dramatize itself as the Romance of Big Business. This frankness, it must be emphasized, does not extend to the "frank revelation of structure", which has been mistaken

by a certain group as the essence of Modernism; it is frankness of a much more valuable sort, for it reveals a perfect satisfaction with utility and service as a rôle, and an unwillingness to pretend; much as a business executive does not feel it necessary to pose as a merchant prince or a Viking freebooter even though he does not care to make his methods public. That is precisely the distinction between structural and genuine frankness in architecture. The one is exhibitionism, the other is honesty.

### III.

Unpretentiousness and honesty are, to be sure, qualities that the Modernist architect will willingly admit, and it takes no great acumen to recognize them in his work; it is primarily a question of how you go about finding them. It is possible to believe, in view of this distinction, that Rockefeller Center is just as honest and unpretentious, considering its important function, as the most modest farmhouse; and a good deal more so than some of the examples of European functionalism, overladen as they are with spurious Machine Age mysticism and esthetic snobbery.

We get on more debatable ground, however, when we start to consider the less practical features of Rockefeller Center. Perhaps the most striking of these is the predominance of vertical lines which in each tower sweep from base to summit without interruption or challenge. There is nowhere to be seen a single horizontal of consequence. The impression that this spectacle creates is an extraordinarily exhilarating one, one of absolute freedom; but it is one completely lacking in any sort of drama, by which I mean conflict or variety. What it expresses is not so much the triumphant and final emergence of one tendency over several, but solitary and unimpeded growth, placid and tree-like, the mass gradually tapering to come to an end without climax. This very same absence of struggle and exertion against opposing forces is everywhere apparent in the various features of the Center. Does there exist in the entire group a single curved line of consequence? Is there a curve in the outline, in the masses, in the general plan, even in the details? Yet the curve is the classic symbol of restlessness and resistance, of the interplay of forces. No one other feature of Modernism is more significant than this scrupulous, almost

timid, avoidance of the curve. An angular style is a lifeless style, without energy or will; a style created on paper, or thought up as something clever; not inspired, but reasoned out like a proposition from Euclid. It is, in consequence, a style that can be easily grasped, and once grasped, imitated; that is why Modernism is so popular, and so completely lacking in distinction. One further illustration will suffice to make clear the rational and listless quality of the style. There is no forced symmetry evident anywhere: no detail—whether a window or a building—that is distorted for the sake of the general effect. Each unit exists inviolate and self-sufficient, esthetically independent of the rest. Radio City dominates because of its size; but the French and British buildings are not dependent for their effectiveness on any other unit in the Center. One cannot call this harmony, for harmony presupposes a certain interrelation, but here there is none. It is simply the absence of compulsion.

This is evident enough in the general layout of the group, and to a less extent in the pronounced vertical movement—so completely unlike the Gothic interplay of lines that one cannot cease to wonder that the two can be compared except for purposes of contrast. The notion, however, is just as clear in the show portions of the interior—in the lobbies and the arcade. Here the ceilings rest inertly on the walls; of the interaction between wall and vault there is no sign or trace; and, of course, the arch, being a curve, is outlawed. Nowhere is there a single sign of energy and life, everywhere a sweet reasonableness and freedom and individualism. The same conclusion confronts us when we approach the Center by an entirely different method. No one has seen the group who has not seen its sculpture and murals. As works of art they speak for themselves: the whole collection of allegories belongs by right in the province of folklore, not of art, for it is a perfect lexicon of modern shibboleths—Progress, Knowledge, the Dissemination of Enlightenment by the Radio, Mankind Seeking Eternal Youth, the Conquest of Superstition—and more. If future generations know what to value they will cherish these specimens over all other twentieth century relics. They epitomize, in a far more direct manner than architecture can, a whole way of thinking and dreaming.

Our concern, however, is not (worse luck) with them as works



of art, but with their place in the general scheme; what is the relationship, we ask, of this sculpture and painting to the architecture? The answer briefly put is that the three arts are completely isolated; painting, sculpture, architecture exist side by side, without trespassing. Now this is a noteworthy circumstance, for in Gothic architecture (as St. Patrick's will show) sculpture played an essential rôle in the style. Likewise, in the latter half of the Renaissance—that period called by continental historians the Baroque—painting was equally important to architecture. Modernism, as is to be expected, makes a virtue of this disunion; but without any sort of justification. It is but the peculiarity of Modernism that it will have no traffic with the other arts—not its superiority. The reason for this aloofness is obvious enough: it wishes to maintain its architectural independence. Believing as it does that architectural beauty resides in the satisfactory arrangement of simple geometric forms—cubes, rectangles, etc., and in plain surfaces, clean-cut lines, and at all times in clarity, it very naturally eschews sculpture except for the most trivial decorative purposes. Thanks to this rigid isolation of sculpture vis-à-vis of architecture, it is permissible to talk of the “architectural beauties” of silos and grain elevators and blast furnaces. None of these objects is, by any sort of reliable definition, architecture; yet they are pure geometric forms upon which art has not laid a defiling hand. Nothing more clearly demonstrates the strictly temporary nature of modernism than this: it is a taste, a fancy, based not on an eternal truth but purely and simply on a psychological peculiarity demanding the complete detachment and independence of the arts. That is a point that one need not labor; but it is well to recall—it is occasionally forgotten—that Modernism is not the “absolute” and “true” style, but only a style true to our modes of thought. That in itself should be sufficient authority for any style, and if it is not, then there is something wrong.

The murals within the buildings illustrate the same fact. It is not necessary to remind anyone that painting can have an architectural rôle, that it can create spatial effects and light, and supplement those already existing. This is something which every church ceiling of the seventeenth century in Italy did. Yet in the murals in Rockefeller Center there is no empyrean, no perspective, no suggestion of space, only sumptuousness and color.

## IV.

Whether or not this separation of the arts is a good thing we need not inquire; nor, for that matter, whether those other attributes of Modernism—freedom from constraint, rationalism, simplicity, and the cult of usefulness—are less valid than any other series. They do, however, give us what we are looking for; an insight into the Modernist architect's mentality; and no insult is intended when we say that it is obviously a middle class mind, loyal to all the middle class ideals. We have been led in this country to believe that the architect is a daring revolutionary and far-seeing genius, who is not deceived by conventions: unhappily, the architect has been led into believing the same, and delights to think of himself as a social prophet, full of wisdom about the Obsolescence of Individualism, and the Rise of a New Social Order, all the while remaining true to an older faith when it was a question of doing serious work and not of talking. That is why it is so vital to learn how to discriminate, as we have learned in the case of other artists, between what he thinks he thinks, and what he actually does think; for as in this case, the two are apt to be totally contradictory.

Essentially, the Modern architect is no revolutionary: there is not one important element in the Modernist style which had not been discussed and propounded on the eve of the French Revolution—that supreme expression of bourgeois ideals—and that is an established truth, which our contemporary innovators find it convenient to ignore. The Modern architect is merely obeying the precepts of generations of radical middle-class artists, and adding his own slight share to the style. While he decries the nineteenth century, he is expressing it in his work. His art is but the expression of a point of view we have not really outgrown. It is a significant commentary on the bourgeois nature of Modernism that the two nations embarked on a socialistic experiment, Germany and Russia, have both officially repudiated the style.

There is no reason that a competent psychology of architecture cannot re-write the history of the art; not as recent architects have attempted to do, by ridiculing the past and bragging about the present; but as the history of literature has been to a great extent re-written. Nor is there any reason why it should not be able to

foretell what a collectivist style would be, whether Fascist or Communist. It is a large order, to be sure, but it must be done, not only for the sake of the layman, but for the sake of the bewildered architect himself.

*by Arthur Link Newton*

### VISTA

At thirty years, the spectre stalks  
Across the doubtless plain of tomorrow  
The while he subtly seeks to borrow  
Unborn joys of promised years and talks  
Of yesterday.

Blithe words, falling meaningless now  
From wrinkled lips, cannot alleviate  
Chill dread of him nor yet obliterate  
The rumbling suns and distant sough  
Of wintry winds.

Nor can recollected ecstasies conceal  
The slow decerebration of the grotesque aimless band  
Of victims of his years and grim sclerotic hand  
Who shuffle dimly up and cluster at his heel,  
Muttering

Incoherent shreds of fixed ideas, staring  
Dimly into death they do not recognize,  
Greyly mouthing toothless ridicule that lies  
Like leaded sky on shoulders bearing  
Thirty years.

by Edward Wagenknecht

## THE WORLD AND MARY JOHNSTON

MISS Johnston's position in our contemporary literature is somewhat anomalous. Twenty-five years ago her romances of colonial Virginia were selling by the hundreds of thousands. Today she is a neglected writer.

"Of course," says the literary wiseacre, "the sword-and-cloak romance is out of date." This we may grant him freely, but the explanation does not touch the problem, for Miss Johnston never wrote a sword-and-cloak romance in her life. Not, that is to say, in the sense in which we generally use the term, in the sense in which the type is exemplified by such books as *Janice Meredith* and *Monsieur Beaucaire* and *When Knighthood Was in Flower*. *To Have and To Hold* marked her nearest approach, but even here there was far too much "inwardness" for the book to fit comfortably into the accepted classification. And as far as that is concerned, it is this very book, *To Have and To Hold*, that has been selling steadily now for more than a generation, that is still selling much better than many "novels of the year". Our taste in literature may change as much as it will; it is still very difficult to conceive of a time when there will be no place for the high-hearted tale of great adventure. Witness here the success of John Buchan, witness the far more astonishing triumph of Sabatini—himself admittedly under the influence of Mary Johnston—right in the midst of the utilitarian era.

Now, I have no intention whatever of apologizing for *To Have and To Hold*. There is nothing in it of which Miss Johnston today could possibly feel ashamed. Following the development of her work from *Prisoners of Hope* to *Drury Randall*, I do not, indeed, find that she has ever experienced the need of retractation. There are no broken ends lying about. But I do find that her life, her art, her philosophy have progressed steadily, simply, irresistibly. And whoever supposes that *To Have and To Hold* is the kind of



thing she is writing today, or upon which she could wish to stake her whole reputation has read her, surely, to little purpose.

It may seem that I have begun on a false note. Is it not rather insulting to consider the work of an artist upon the basis of its practical success? And when the artist in question is a writer whose sales passed the million mark as far back as twenty years ago, is it not a bit absurd as well as insulting? What if Mary Johnston, at sixty-five, has shown signs of losing her hold? Most writers give out much earlier. And not many American women have received more generous recognition than she has.

In reply, I can only urge that when I complain of what seems to me the present neglect of Miss Johnston's work, it is not especially in her behalf that I enter the protest. I know of no writer who is less in need of sympathy. I am thinking rather of ourselves. For here is a novelist who is filling book after book with the spiritual food for which this age is desperately hungry, with the nourishment for want of which it is actually starving to death. How serious the need is, was never better revealed than by the utter and infinitely lamentable failure of *Sweet Rocket* in 1920. Here was a book which actually achieved a restatement of the Old Truth in terms which this generation ought to have been able to understand, a serenely beautiful summation of the highest kind of spiritual experience that the men and women of our time have been able to grasp. Yet nine critics out of ten condemned the book unconditionally if they noticed it at all, and today the average well-read American has no idea that such a volume exists.

Yet she has, as a writer, her limitations. Lest I seem utterly reckless, let me speak of them here. For inevitably the foregoing must seem extravagant to many readers, and to none more so than to Mary Johnston. "Mine is no isolated experience," she once wrote me: "many persons have been and are aware of a widening and deepening of consciousness. My experience is of value to me, but it has no special prominence in that enlargement of life into which we are all sweeping—you no less than myself." If she is right, if the "overman", if the "superhumanity" of which she dreams, be indeed in process of development, then these pioneering novels of hers must someday seem very primitive, very

crude. For one thing there is as yet no vocabulary adequate to describe those kinds of experience, to indicate those planes of consciousness in which she is particularly interested; worse, her readers do not as yet possess the experiential background necessary really to understand what she is talking about.

Even apart from such considerations, her books have faults.

In the early romances, the nature background is richly felt, and richly—is sometimes a bit floridly—described. Occasionally similar effects are achieved in later volumes; sometimes, even, one discerns growth. I think there is nothing in the earlier books quite so fine as the picture of the moon and the clouds in the eighth chapter of *Foes*. But sometimes, too, inspiration deserts her, and then we get a carefully “made” description, like that of the coming of day in the fifth story of *The Wanderers*.

Her dialogue is often unconvincing. Her lovers sometimes speak as no lovers ever spoke in life. In *Croatan*, Ruy Valdez and Miles Darling are in the mood of the old Platonic drama. One cannot quite believe in the Delicia-Jeanne situation in *Miss Delicia Allen*.

There are many stylistic experiments in the later books, and not all of them are quite successful. In *Silver Cross* a deliberately clipped style does, I think, achieve atmosphere. Here, as in the “Moonlight” chapter in *The Wanderers*, we seem to see the characters through a kind of white mist, an effect very suggestive of that obtained in Debussy’s music. But it would be too much, here and elsewhere, to say that the spell is never broken or that the effort never shows.

Sometimes the historian in Miss Johnston usurps the place of the novelist—as in *1492* and the Civil War books; sometimes the sociologist—as in *Hagar*; sometimes the philosopher—as in *Michael Forth*. And for all the spiritual nourishment to be found in her later volumes, I must admit that she is not often able these days to achieve the vividness, the spontaneity, that came apparently without effort in her first novels.

All these things are true.

It is also true that there are spots on the sun. But the sun still gives light.

Once I heard Miss Zona Gale give a fascinating lecture on

"Allotropes". The diamond is the allotrope of coal; J. W. Thomson had recently announced the discovery of an allotrope of water. From here Miss Gale went on to a breath-taking discussion of the possibility of developing more allotropes in art and in life—the allotrope of the novel, for example, and "the allotrope of ourselves".

It is my conviction that if the allotrope of the novel exists anywhere in contemporary fiction, it is in such books as those that Miss Johnston has been giving us during recent years that we shall find it. And it is significant because it expresses the allotrope of ourselves—the New Man, the New Woman that the age is even now in process of developing. Here, then, is the tragedy of Mary Johnston—that many readers have already dismissed her as belonging to the past, while the real difficulty is that she has gone so far ahead into the future that they find it impossible to catch up with her.

## II.

What, then, is the task that the novelist Mary Johnston has set for herself? There is a very interesting—of course, quite unconscious—description of it in an early novel, *Lewis Rand*. Of the titular hero of that book, Miss Johnston speaks as follows:

The man himself dealt with humanity, wherever found and in whatever time, however differentiated, however allied, with its ancestry of the brute and its destiny of the spirit; with the root of the tree and the far-off flower and every intermediate development of stem and leaf; with the soil that sustained that marvellous growth, and with the unknown Gardener who for an unfathomable purpose had set the inexplicable seed in an unthinkable universe.

In other words, the problem is an interrogation of life. Its range is the range of the human spirit.

First, of the past. Miss Johnston has now written twenty-three novels. Fifteen are concerned, wholly or in part, with her native Virginia. Of these, seven deal with colonial Virginia: *Prisoners of Hope*, *To Have and To Hold*, *Audrey*, *Croatan*, *The Slave Ship*, *The Great Valley*, and *Hunting Shirt*. *Lewis Rand* lives near Jefferson's Monticello. *The Long Roll* and *Cease Firing* are played against the epic background of the Civil War. Miss

*Delicia Allen* opens in the forties and ends during the War. *Drury Randall* covers the last half of the nineteenth century. Michael Forth is born not long after the close of the War and lives on into our times. *Hagar* does not begin until well towards the close of the century. *Sweet Rocket* is confined to the contemporary period.

Of the other novels, *Sir Mortimer* deals with the Elizabethan sea-rovers, in the Old World and the New. England proper furnishes the setting for two books: Henry VII's England in *Silver Cross*, the seventeenth century in *The Witch*. Delicia Allen pays a visit to Victoria's England. *Foes* and the non-Virginian portion of *The Slave Ship* are set in eighteenth century Scotland. The scene of 1492 is sufficiently indicated by its title. *The Fortunes of Garin* takes place in twelfth century France. Widest in scope is *The Wanderers*, which begins in prehistoric times and does not end until the French Revolution. *The Exile* is staged on an imaginary island in the not-so-distant future.

As has already been suggested, many Americans do not know that Miss Johnston has ever written anything essentially unlike *To Have and To Hold*. Those who do, sometimes assume that her work breaks sharply in the year 1918. Up to that time she had been giving us historical romances. Since 1918 she has devoted herself to "mystical writing". Because I refuse myself to admit any such contradiction in her work as this description would imply, I must sketch the broad outlines of her development as they appear to me.

Only the first five novels—*Prisoners of Hope*, *To Have and To Hold*, *Audrey*, *Sir Mortimer*, and *Lewis Rand*—are "straight" historical romances. The ideas, the problems involved in these books are purely personal; they owed their success to the fact that each told a thrilling story of romance and adventure against a rich, clearly-visualized background. With the two Civil War books we come to the beginning of the sociological period: the drama of the individual is subordinated to the drama of a people. This aspect finds its best expression in *Hagar*, in which Miss Johnston lent her voice to an eloquent expression of the twentieth century woman's demand for emancipation from traditional taboos and for complete equality with man, and it culminates in *The Wanderers*, a series of studies in the changing relations between men and



women. The other two books of the middle period are difficult to classify, looking backward as they do to the older romances, and, at the same time, foreshadowing the "mystical" tendencies of much later books. Essentially, however, I think they belong to the sociological group. In *The Fortunes of Garin*, we have, besides the love story, and closely entangled in it, a study of the collapse of the feudal system, and the theme of *The Witch* is the struggle for religious freedom.

Following *The Wanderers*—and a change of publishers—came the three definitely "mystical" books—*Foes*, *Michael Forth*, and *Sweet Rocket*—manifesting a culmination of the accumulating inwardness of all Miss Johnston's earlier writing. In *Foes*, the method is still that of the historical novel. It is difficult for me to speak with proper restraint of this wonderful book. It is, to my way of thinking, clearly Miss Johnston's masterpiece; there are times when I think it almost worthy to place beside Sir Walter Scott. Take the depth and vividness of the remarkable eighth chapter for instance, or the power of the scene at the close of Chapter XV, where Elspeth says good-bye to Glenfernie. In *Michael Forth* and in *Sweet Rocket*, the historical background is missing, and considered strictly as novels, the books are far less successful. After *Sweet Rocket* comes another change of publisher, and from *Silver Cross* to *Drury Randall*, we have a very attractive synthesis of all the divergent qualities that had hitherto been manifested.

### III.

This interest in history, then, is no digression on Miss Johnston's part. It is integral, vital. The past controls the future. The future remoulds the past. As for the present, what is it but a link, a bridge between the two? Every man carries the past within himself, as the blue and the gray in *Cease Firing* feel endless vistas opening out behind them:

They spoke the same language, they read the same Bible, they had behind them the same background of a far island home, and then of small sailing-ships at sea, and then of a new land, huge forests, Indians, wolves; at last towns and farms, roads, stages, packet-boats, and railway trains.

But a man does not live in the past. In *Foes*, Ian and Glenfernie, mortal enemies, come suddenly face to face:

Alone in a forest, very far back, they might, at this point, have flown at each other's throat. But they had felled many forests since the day when just that was possible.

More than that, a man carries within himself the seeds of the future. "Ah!" cries Garin of Castel-Noir, "what people of the future comes, my lady Audiart, from such as you!"

✓ This idea of growth as summing up the significance of all life naturally accounts for Miss Johnston's tremendous interest in the pioneer. It is somewhat different from Willa Cather's. Miss Cather loves the pioneer because he is real, because he is honest, because he has a firm hold on the fresh plain things that civilization tends to draw us away from. Miss Johnston's pioneers are those who, consciously or unconsciously, carry the banners of human progress, who undertake tasks no human beings have ever undertaken before.

There is hardly a book in which the pioneer does not play some part—the man or woman who has developed further than his fellows and who can see more than they are able to see. In *The Witch*, Joan and Aderhold choose to give up their lives rather than stifle their souls by conforming to outworn creeds and practices. Jayme de Marchena, the narrator of *1492*, is of the same type. In *The Fortunes of Garin*, the Princess Audiart is a champion of the coming democracy. Hagar, and Miriam in *Michael Forth* fight for the emancipation of women. Christopher Guest, in *Croatan*, believes with the Wife of Bath that true nobility inheres in character, not in the accident of descent. Conan Burke, in *The Great Valley*, pleads for justice to the Indians, and imperils his own safety by giving shelter to Mother Dick, popularly supposed to be a witch. Even in the first book of all, *Prisoners of Hope*, the note of advance is sounded. Here is Betty Carrington, the little Puritan, who is ridiculed by her friends because she doubts the righteousness of the slave system. Here, too, Landless gains the undying loyalty of the Indian Monakatocka when he disregards the color line to suck poison from the red man's snake bite. Finally, the love between Patricia Verney and an indentured servant outrages all the traditions of the girl's class.

Even pioneers see truth only in flashes, however, and not always can they live steadily in the light that they see. There is Edward Cary, of *Cease Firing*, who hates war, yet consents to have a share in it.

Had he been more than a dawn type, had he been a very little nearer to the future which he presaged, he might not have been there, somehow, in that dusk at all. He might have declined solutions practised by boar and wolf, and died persuading his kind towards a cleaner fashion of solving their problems. As it was, he hated what he did but did it.

Sometimes bitterness, pain, and travail fall to the pioneer. Michael Forth grows almost without a sense of strain; the larger awareness comes to him nearly without an effort on his part, and all that he needs to do is to keep his fine sensitiveness unblunted. But quite a different experience is that of David Scott, in *The Slave Ship*, for David, with all his tremendous capacities, has a bad heritage, and he fights a bitter fight against cruelty and greed before finally he wins the victory. Even to the innocent suffering comes—to Dame Cis, for example, in *Croatan*. “But as she had not sat down and wailed under it, she was marked too for growth and strength.” And, again, to Elizabeth Burke, in *The Great Valley*, who is captured by Indians and forced to bear a child to an Indian chief, and who finally must live like a wild woman before she wins her way back to the settlements. “The Past took charge” in Elizabeth. She goes back “very far down the ages”, but one feels that she has kept the citadel of her integrity untouched, that she has vindicated the strength of humanity once again. When Miles and Christopher in *Croatan* are constrained to go to war with the Indians, the situation is somewhat different. “Miles, must you? Oh, Christopher, it is falling many a league, down Time!”

And this, of course, is sin, retrogression. Sin is retrogression. There is surprisingly little about sin in Miss Johnston's books. She is not a moralist; she is an idealist. And the morality of an idealist is a challenging, not a stifling, thing. The best illustration is the incident in *Michael Forth* where Michael is tempted by his cousin, Dorothea:

“... I think that we roved together a lot in the past, you

and I. . . . Suppose you, also, try to stop that lorelei work of taking oneself in one's own net. Every fish you take—lovers, pride, domination, cruelty, indolence, self-love, and all the rest of it—pulls you deeper yet into the ancient sea. I know, for not so long ago and not so far away I have been there—am there quite sufficiently still! Throw the net away, stop the old singing, and see if you can't hear a lark overhead!"

"You're preaching!"

"No, I'm not. I'm calling your attention to some facts in nature."

She began to walk again. "I don't see that our old, long past was so very wrong."

"I don't in the least say that. I won't say a word against the ancient sea. When we were in it, if we were sincere, it was all that we could do. It has its own powers, beauties, and truths. But the winged thing mustn't return to the finned thing."

#### IV.

Miss Johnston's treatment of love is essentially idealistic, but this does not mean that she is Victorian. The nerve-wrecking pangs of desire enter more than once into her books. Take Lord Carnal's passion for Jocelyn in *To Have and To Hold*, or Carthew's for Joan Heron in *The Witch*, best of all the betrayal and suicide of Elspeth in *Foes*. Michael Forth rejoices that as a child he had a "clean, straight, honest, lofty physiology with never an organ or function blue-penciled". At one period in his youth, Michael himself falls in with the undertow and is carried back to the ancient sea, but its waters are not to his taste, and his sojourn in them is brief.

In the early romances, love naturally plays a conspicuous rôle, and it is treated more or less in the conventional romantic manner. Already its supra-mundane aspects are suggested, as when Sir Mortimer and Damaris Sedley see their devotion to each other as "coeval with existence". The last words of *To Have and to Hold* are fairly representative of this period: "All things die not: while the soul lives, love lives: the song may be now gay, now plaintive, but it is deathless."

There are notable changes in the later novels. In *The Fortunes of Garin*, romantic love is again the theme, but the woman is a dream, the avatar of a chivalric ideal, and when fulfilment does



come at last, it is by no means along the old conventional lines. *Hagar* has sometimes been called an unromantic book because the heroine insists that if a woman is to be good for anything she must learn to stand on her own feet, that she does not owe matrimony to the world, and that it is possible to live happily and usefully even if love never comes. But this is a superficial view. Hagar, too, knows the sting of sex, fights the old past briefly and decisively when she finds herself falling in love with another woman's man, and at last comes herself to the mating. Miss Johnston's fundamental balance never showed better than here. The zeal of her ardor for suffrage did not betray her into disregarding the primal forces by which life is governed. And in both *The Witch* and *Michael Forth* we get the adjustment and fulfillment that is marriage on a plane far transcending the mere physical relationship.

The mystical element in Miss Johnston's later books has made it natural for her to handle effectively the most impressive and the most mysterious element in love—that magical transformation by which the beloved ceases to be thought of as an ordinary human being and takes on a color and splendor that sets him in a world apart. When Elizabeth Selkirk gazes upon Conan Burke, "The rose and silver, the purple and golden light, flared from him. Sun rushed from him, power rushed from him." To Miles Darling the experience comes in the moment when he takes leave of Virginia, just before starting for the war:

She lay her length, with one arm outstretched over the sand. Her face was in three-quarter to him, her eyes closed. Her face, very still now, was no longer the face of a child or a slip of a girl. There was something profound—oh, so deep!—sorrow surely, but it might be joy. Her breast rose and fell; deep shadow and broken light seemed at odds. or perhaps in agreement, in her face. All suddenly she became magical to Miles Darling. It was as though she lay within an oval of light. It penetrated her; it was her and she was the light. Magic! It crept toward him, it bathed him. He dropped his face in his hands, but then must look again. Magic! Magic! His eyes swam in tears, his heart seemed too large for his breast. He had never even known that she was beautiful.

## V.

But love is not the only mode of experience through which the soul seeks to comprehend the meaning of life. "Mysticism" is a bad word, for the reason that it may mean anything or nothing. Miss Johnston feels that it has been somewhat overworked in its relation to her books. Since, however, there is no better word available, let us attempt, if we can, to define the much-discussed "mystical" element in her novels.

It is a difficult task. Hagar speaks of the fourth dimension; so does the dying Stafford in *Cease Firing*, but this does not help very much. Perhaps no formula can. "All that present language can devise is but a word, a figure, a symbol. What we mean is the next advance in consciousness. When you have it you know it."

The *dramatis personae* of Miss Johnston's later novels are, many of them, pioneers in this field. They believe that "There existed a consciousness surpassing old levels that we had known". They are inspired by the thought that "A part of the world is passing beyond old powers into new. We are somehow in the ranks of that expeditionary force". They regard themselves as experiencing now what will some day be the common possession of the race. "Here and there, throughout the past, and often now I think in our own day, a man or woman lays hold upon faculties that someday all will lay hold upon."

Miss Johnston envisages, then, for this twentieth century a tremendous deepening and enlargement of human personality. We have already transformed the physical world—what with our automobiles and our airplanes and our electric light and our radio—and we are just beginning to discover that the old personality is not adequate to cope with the new problems that have thus been raised. Many who are not mystics at all, in Miss Johnston's sense, have yet come independently to realize that unless some far-reaching changes can be made to take place in the stuff of human nature itself, we can hardly hope to avoid destruction. And since life has a curious way of developing new capacities in response to new needs, it is not unreasonable to assume that the perceptions of those who already discern signs of this change may have some basis in fact.

This new development implies, among other things, a breaking-down of the old barriers of space and time. Martha Fullwood, of *Croatan*, hears the ringing of English bells in Virginia. When the Selkirks emigrate to America, they are conscious of the veritable presence of the daughter they have left behind them in Scotland. Michael Forth is aware of Miriam's presence also, though she is far away. "Miriam and I talked without words, met in a large land behind Time and Space and Form as we had known them." Best of all, perhaps, there is communion between the "living" and the "dead". Of this there are several instances, none more impressive than the case of Kirstie Mackay in *The Great Valley*. She had been kept away from the man she loved by religious prejudices in their respective families. And then he had died. Yet the victory, beyond question, was with love. "Those silly giants had not kept them apart, nor had silly death!" And now "Kirstie Mackay moved with a dead lover in a land above a land."

This is living *sub specie aeternitatis* with a vengeance, living in a realm and on a plane of consciousness where the problems that seem most formidable here fall into proper perspective and are dissolved away. In an absolute sense, nobody now living possesses this power. "Christ is born, then he grows up"—and those who are farthest along on the road today have not yet long been born. They see the light intermittently: they have not learned how to raise the entire personality to the new level. Some of the most dramatic moments in Miss Johnston's novels concern themselves with this awakening, in most cases an awakening towards which the whole life has been tending, but which comes suddenly, like a flash of light on the Damascus road. So it is with Richard Kaye in *The Exile*: "He had seemed to awake, to awake from awakeness. It was over in a flash, but it left thrill and reverberation. So it *was* possible to be conscious in a different way, to know time, space and causation *differently*—with a greater completeness—otherwise!" So it is too when Glenfernie becomes aware of the unity of all—both friends and enemies: "He saw and heard, felt and tasted, life in greater lengths and breadths. He comprehended more of the pattern. The tones and semi-tones fell into the long scale."

## VI.

The Sense of the Whole. Here, of course, is the heart of the problem. The lover, the poet, the scholar, the scientist, the priest, the mystic—what are they doing, one and all, in their several ways and along their respective paths, save seeking an adjustment, a coördination? The need to love, the need to understand, the need to worship—here are but different variations of the same impulse, of the common necessity that is upon us all to find our individual place in the great scheme of things, to bring our own contribution to the universal symphony.

"The holder-back is the sense of disunity." This we must slough off before we can possess the Sense of the Whole. Some persons, some places diffuse an atmosphere which radiates harmony. Such persons are Mrs. Allison in *Foes*, Aunt Sarah in *Michael Forth*. Such a place is Sweet Rocket. When Miss Darcy reached Sweet Rocket, "She experienced coherence that was wider than old coherences. She interlocked with the place and her hosts. She held them, they held her." But unity has not really been achieved until it includes all.

Different natures approach unity in different ways. Hagar's is the artist's power of merging with her material. "She never lost the child's and the poet's power of coalescence." For Denny Gayde in the same novel the mystic consciousness is all shot through with a sense of social obligation: "We've got to feel, 'if you are struck, I am struck. If you are wearing stripes, I am wearing stripes.' We've got to feel something more than Brotherhood. We've got to feel identity." Paradoxically enough, they feel identity most keenly who are farthest along upon the road; it was Jesus who dined with publicans and sinners. Take the grand diapason at the close of *Foes*: "We sin in differing ways and at different times, but we all sin. And we all struggle with it and through it and onward!" Richard Kaye does not feel superior to those who cannot share his views: "What is true of me is true of all others. One is at the dawn, one is in the hour before it, one is at midnight—that is all. Ahead of us are those in full day." In full day much grows clear. The color problem, for example. "I suppose that some day the colors of the spectrum



will recognize that somewhere they really are together, and that there is little use in playing ostrich."

But a man has foes. When Glenfernie stands beside the Kelpie's Pool and realizes that the man he had called friend has cruelly betrayed him in the deepest and most sacred quality of human life, unity breaks for him into little pieces. "He seemed to stand in open, endless, formless space, and in unfenced time." Frequently, in her historical novels, Miss Johnston has had to deal with these long hard duels between men. In *Foes*, she has devoted an entire novel to this problem, and it is here that the solution is worked out in accord with her maturest ideas. But it must not be supposed that because Glenfernie finally forgives Ian, there is any Pollyanna optimism in the book or any juggling with right and wrong. Hate takes possession of Glenfernie as fully as it has ever possessed a man. Had the author been content to treat her characters on the ordinary surface of life, the situation must have ended with the death of one or the other or of both. But she sees more than that, sees them, if you will, on various planes, the long inheritance of the past blending into the promise of the future. The book ends as it does because, when all the elements of the situation have been satisfied, this is the only way it possibly could end. The problem has been thought through; we have reached the heart of the mystery. "My fellow man is myself," says Aderhold. And Michael Forth adds: "The very ones that a man calls foes—it is impossible not to love them."

Only, there is more than individual enmity in this world; there is group enmity as well. So war emerges in Miss Johnston's pages inevitably as the negation of life, the enemy of harmony and of God. All war is essentially suicide. "Self murderously fought self" is the way Michael puts it. "We hurt ourselves right often," says old Mancy, of *Sweet Rocket*, and Miss Darcy begins to speculate on the possibility of finding a way out. "Perhaps in the tissue wide as space, centers here and centers there are beginning to learn self heal as well as self hurt." "We've got to stop tearing one another's throats," says Richard Kaye; "that's tearing one's own throat at the last! Freezing and starving and poisoning one another, that's doing all that in the end—and, my God! a shorter

and shorter end—to one's self! We've got to find life that doesn't breed that way." In *The Great Valley*, John Selkirk suggests a method to the colonists overshadowed by fear of the approaching French and Indian War:

There is not yet war. It may come, it may even with probability come. If it does, it will be because all, or most, or enough to bring it on, on all sides, say Yes! Not if, on all sides, they say No! Then it will not come. Questions will be settled in other ways—less expensive ways. Perhaps they will not be what is called 'settled'; perhaps they will just drift away and be dissolved in some larger way of thinking. I know what you will say, my people, my sons, and this strong and good young man who is with us to-day. I know it all. I have heard it all my life, and my father and his father before him heard it all their lives. And yet I say, 'What ye strongly expect and build for ye shall receive—having constructed it.'

Twenty years ago, in her Civil War novels, Miss Johnston anticipated all that is valid in the realistic war novel of today. Nowhere has the gigantic blasphemy of war been more mercilessly revealed, and it is a striking commentary on the erudition of our reviewers that when, a few years ago, they were hailing the discovery of Evelyn Scott's Civil War novel, *The Wave*, none of them saw fit to recall that Miss Johnston had already created an epic in this field.<sup>1</sup> There is, indeed, one striking difference between Miss Johnston's Civil War books and those coming out of the World War, in that her book is not primarily a piece of propaganda but a work of art. Her canvas is broader and her brush is wider; she is not exclusively preoccupied with squalor and filth. Let no man suppose that for this reason we hate war less in Miss Johnston's pages than we are made to hate it elsewhere. One cannot tell anything about Mars that is worse than the truth. It is not necessary to construct a "case" against him.

<sup>1</sup>Nor, for that matter, did reviewers of *The Great Meadow*, by Elizabeth Madox Roberts, see fit to remind their readers that Miss Johnston had used the same material in *The Great Valley*. In Miss Robert's latest novel, *He Sent Forth a Raven*, Miss Johnston's influence is very notable in the style.

## VII.

In all this, what is there of religion? Very little, in one sense; in another sense, it is all religion. Very little in the way of a creed. Michael Forth's grandfather finds spiritual awakening through Swedenborg, and there is much concern with reincarnation in *Foes* and *The Exile*. But all this is art, not propaganda.

Several of Miss Johnston's characters are definitely in rebellion against a hide-bound or literalist creed, the reason being that such a creed inhibits religious progress and constitutes a barrier to the free life of the spirit. This conflict is very strong in *The Witch*. It is, I think, Miss Johnston's attitude on this point which explains her comparatively unsympathetic portrait of Martin Luther in *The Wanderers*: "He thought that his definition of religion was the whole definition." Generally, in her pages, religion remains Christo-centric, but the Christ-ideal far transcends the limits of a single life in first century Palestine. "I am Christian," says the laird of Glenfernie, "where Christ is taken very universally—the higher Self, the mounting Wisdom of us all . . ."

The transcendent God is, in her pages, an object of considerably less interest than the immanent God, for Miss Johnston is not a philosophical novelist in the sense that she is unduly given to speculation on the nature of things for its own sake. The idea of God, God in Heaven, is—we are frequently in danger of forgetting—of much greater philosophical than religious significance. Strictly speaking, religion is not concerned with God in Heaven at all; it is concerned with God only in his relations with men. Hagar meets this problem as a child and tries vainly to figure it out:

She was homesick to be a good woman when she grew up, and to learn all the time to know beautiful things, but she wasn't homesick for Heaven where God lived. Then was she wicked? Hagar wondered and wondered. The yellow sand dropped from between her palms . . . God in the sand, God in me, God here and now . . . Then God also is trying to grow more God . . . Hagar drew a great sigh, and for the moment gave it up.

Other, maturer thinkers do not give it up. Aderhold works out the idea of the unity of God and man in the old terms of mi-

crocosm and macrocosm. In *Sweet Rocket*, we hear of a heretic who was persecuted because she insisted "that a time would come when every man and woman could do the things that Jesus did". Mrs. Cliff thinks of the problem as essentially one of integration: Jesus exists in little bits in all of us, and our task is the task of putting him together. Michael Forth rebels against the deity of Christ as dogma because it makes more difficult the development of a Christ-like humanity: "I could feel the Christ Idea, that had always been in the world, nearer Him, not so near to me, and to that extent He was diviner than me. The extent might be huge. He might be adult and I a babe. But Idea is free ocean and free atmosphere. I, too, swam and flew toward myself as Risen Man." This is the Goal, the Goal toward which all life has been tending, this alone lends meaning to humanity's long trek. Of the ultimate outcome there cannot be the slightest doubt, but it will not be easily achieved. "Who denied the dark? There were the dark and the light, and the million, million tones of each! And there was the eternal space where differences trembled into harmony."

It is this harmony, this preponderance of the good over the bad upon which, in the final instance, our trust must be based. Miss Johnston's faith in such preponderance is sure. "In a thousand years," she writes of Silver Cross abbey, "there was good and evil, but more good than evil." This point of view appears often in her portraits of historical characters—Queen Elizabeth, Richard the Lion-Hearted, Columbus, Sir Walter Raleigh. It appears still more notably in such characters of her own imagining as Maury Stafford, Lewis Rand—"He was yet in a land of effort and anguish, but the god within him saw the light."—and the courtesan, Morgan Fay, in *Silver Cross*, with her pitiful gropings toward the light and her ultimate cleansing. The conventional, utterly graceless villain never appears in Miss Johnston's pages—even Lord Carnal is humanized at the end.

And here again we meet the same paradox that is so striking in the New Testament, the paradox that underlies all true religious feeling. The Kingdom of God is still to come, yet the Kingdom of God is here. No matter what calamities come, they cannot utterly crush those whose hope is fixed on eternal things. Joan



and Aderhold suffer nearly everything that a woman and a man can suffer, yet in the end, though the end is death, "Pain did not win". There is something in life itself that is essentially undefeatable, something that guns cannot kill. As the old woman Sairy points out with the Civil War raging all around her: "Life ain't dead. She's sick, I'll allow, but my land! she's stood a power of sickness!" And again: "It's an awful safe universe." And Jayme de Marchena, the narrator of *1492*, perceives, as Socrates did so long ago, that no harm can come to the good man. "Surely they who serve large purposes are cared for. Though they should die in prison, yet are they cared for!" It is in this faith, too, that David Scott at last painfully possesses his soul: "A time would come—a time would come—when Earth should put on Heaven. I thought, I felt, I lived. I knew my work. I was uplifted."

### VIII.

What are we to do to bring in the new day? In one sense, nothing. The advance in consciousness is coming, as surely, as inevitably as the Renaissance came or the discovery of the law of evolution, and nothing that any man can do will change it. In a deeper sense, however, we can do everything. Every time a human being follows the highest light that his eyes have been able to see, the day is hastened; every time he goes back for a swim in the ancient sea, it is postponed. That is all.

Miss Johnston, however, is not a propagandist. She does not, as did that other great pioneer, Mary Austin, proselytize in behalf of her ideas. It is not her object, as it is, for example, Bernard Shaw's, to incite her readers to rise up in arms and remedy a set of intolerable conditions. She is simply, as artist, engaged in the reassembling, the interpretation of her own spiritual experience and that of her time. Her novels are different from others because she sees what not many others have yet been able to see.

Only once does she suggest anything approximating a programme. The passage is from *Michael Forth*:

I had had intimations of a path. To treat syntheses as phenomena to be realized, used, and grown by just as their component phenomena had been realized, used, and grown

by—to take Memory and Imagination as the great Powers that they were—to use Reason with a wide swing—to trust Intuition—to cease saying, “It is not penetrable,” or, “It is afar,” or, “It is dead,” or, “Past and Future are unenterable,” or, “There is no participation nor perception outside this circle.”

There is one other idea by which I have been deeply impressed in my reading of Miss Johnston's novels: the absence in her work of any stress upon the idea of sacrifice. This, it seems to me, is quite in line with her general tendency. Her peace is thrillingly adventurous; her morality is throbbingly alive. In other words, it is time frankly to realize that the estimate of self-sacrifice as a virtue in itself, which has been so prominent in our religion and our morality alike has by this time long since outlived any such usefulness as it may once have possessed. By this I do not mean that Miss Johnston's people live selfishly. Indeed this is precisely what I do not mean. It is the sacrificer who is selfish, who is in bondage to the idea of self even in the very moment of relinquishment, just as it has long been recognized that the ascetic, no less than the libertine, has bowed his head to the yoke of the flesh. The point is that Miss Johnston's characters live. They live not for self, nor yet for “others”, but for Life! When suffering comes, they accept it, but they do not court it, and they do not glory in it. They are one with the Whole, and the inevitable result is that all things else fall into their proper relations.

Here, it seems to me, is an achievement in American fiction. Here is great liberal thinking. Here is a realm full of many beauties, precious and of good report, a land in which we may wander at will, an effort of the creative imagination that can hardly fail to bring us refreshment and renewal.

by Homer E. Woodbridge

## WILLIAM ARCHER

### PROPHET OF MODERN DRAMA

WHEN William Archer died, ten years ago, he was beginning to seem slightly old-fashioned to the generation brought up on the ideas of drama which he had championed so long. His once revolutionary teaching had triumphed so completely that it had become orthodox; and he, who had fought more fiercely than any one else the Victorian notions of drama and the Victorian attitude toward the theatre, was easily dismissed by suckling critics as a stuffy Victorian. His career and work received only brief notice, even in the literary press; and no adequate recognition of his services to modern drama, so far as I can discover, has appeared since his death. His brother and collaborator in translating Ibsen, Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Archer, has written his biography<sup>1</sup> and has given us a delightful portrait of the man but the biographer's close relation to his subject has handicapped him in estimating Archer's work. He naturally does much less than justice to the translations, in which he had a share, and pays little attention to their influence. His judgment of Archer's criticism, though sound as far as it goes, errs on the side of modesty. He points out the "frankly opportunist" character of Archer's critical writing and the relativity of his standards, and observes that such criticism, "being professedly of and for its age, must survive, if at all, rather in spite of than in virtue of the critic's chosen method. . . . Provided that his criticism did its work in the present, he would have been well content that it should live in the future only in its effects." Of the depth and range of these effects, however, the book hardly gives an adequate impression.

It is true that Archer was not a great master of style; it is probably true that he was not a great critic, if greatness in criticism is

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<sup>1</sup>*William Archer: Life, Work, and Friendships*. Yale University Press, 1931.

measured by permanence of appeal. He was a hard-working journalist, most of whose work had to be done hastily. But if greatness be measured by a critic's influence on the creative writing of his own time, I doubt whether any English critic of drama can be ranked above Archer. Judged by this standard, his only serious rival would be Dryden; and Dryden's influence was due more to his plays than to his criticism. If a critic is to be judged by his understanding of the contemporary creative mind, and his foresight of the direction it is about to take, Archer's place must certainly be among the highest. He plotted, a generation in advance, the main course of English drama, in what has proved to be one of its greatest periods.

Archer's relation to the drama of the last forty years is a leading case in the old question of the relation of criticism to creative work. Matthew Arnold, a few years before Archer's career began, had maintained that the chief "function of criticism at the present time" was to prepare the way for creation, by establishing "an order of ideas, if not absolutely true, yet true by comparison with that which it displaces." This is a curiously exact definition of what Archer, shortly after Arnold's essay was written, proceeded to do. And the creative achievement followed. It may be argued that the course of English drama without Archer's criticisms and prophecies would have been much the same; somebody else would have translated and championed Ibsen, preached the creed of realism, and fought the good fight for it. But this is only conjecture; the fact remains that it was Archer who did these things, and the evidences of his direct influence upon drama are numerous and strong. Quite apart from these, the accuracy with which he foresaw developments in the theatre is astonishing. In human affairs, an earnest prophecy may be one cause of its own realization. Archer's clear vision of what he wanted British drama to become, his constant and eloquent preaching of his vision, unquestionably helped to bring about the renaissance which he happily lived to see, and to determine its character.

### I.

He began his critical work at a moment when the drama in England was at a low ebb. Born at Perth in 1856, and educated at



Edinburgh, he came to London after some journalistic experience and, after a year spent in Australia, began to review plays in 1879. In that year Matthew Arnold succinctly stated the predicament of the theatre: "In England we have no drama at all." Plays of course were being written and produced, but none that seemed worth the attention of a serious critic. Tom Robertson, the only recent playwright whose work had shown signs of a sense for reality, had died in 1871; and the "cup-and-saucer school" of comedy which had tried to follow his lead had petered out, as Archer later said, in inanities. Looking back on this period of his apprenticeship as a critic, he wrote in 1922: "I confess I am puzzled to conceive how anyone with the smallest pretension to intelligence could in those years seriously occupy himself with the English theatre."

By 1882, however, Archer had applied his intelligence to the theatre to such good purpose that he could present a comprehensive survey of living dramatists, and along with this a statement of his critical creed and a program for the future. The book in which he did this, *English Dramatists of Today*, is not now very exciting reading, because most of the writers with whom it deals are forgotten, as Archer demonstrated that they deserved to be. Nevertheless, the book was of immense value to the cause of the theatre; it was a highly competent and intelligent inventory of stock. Its severe but impartial and reasoned condemnation of the great bulk of contemporary plays was accompanied by generous praise of whatever showed signs of first-hand observation or distinction of style; and more significantly, by a constructive program. "I wish to show," he says in his introduction, "by applying a moderately high standard of criticism to the body of our contemporary drama, how far it falls short of any literary merit, and in so doing to indicate possibilities of improvement." His modest ideal is a drama which will be "not only acted, but read . . . English drama is not read, and is not written to be read. Until it regains the habit which exists throughout Europe and once existed in England, our drama will remain unliterary, frivolous, non-moral." For about a pound, he said, he had bought all the printed plays on his list. Most of the plays which he hoped to see "would probably deal with phases of modern life." They might range from farce to tragedy, but except in the merest farce should

have "at least an undercurrent of seriousness", which "would generally arise from the relation of the work to some moral, social, political—may I add religious?—topic of the day, or better still, of all time."

This was the program; and Archer was fully aware of the function of the critic in its fulfillment. "The coming critic," he said, "must certainly precede the coming dramatist." If the latter were to appear tomorrow, "he would find no public to applaud him, no critics to appreciate him, and consequently no manager to put his pieces on the stage." In his next book, *About the Theatre*, Archer sketched more fully the function of the critic. "In the course of time he may even create in the minds of his readers a certain habitual attitude toward the stage, on which the future of the English drama may in no small measure depend." At the same time he expressed strongly his faith in the potentialities of English drama. "The drama is not dead, but liveth, and contains the germ of better things. It lies with criticism to foster these germs, and in the very effort to foster its own better possibilities." In spite of the failure of melodrama to develop, as he had hoped it might, more "observation and sincerity", he declared, "I cannot quite lose faith in the ultimate evolution of a form of drama which shall soberly and simply reproduce the everyday aspects of modern life."

In the light of Archer's own survey of the contemporary theatre in these two volumes, and of what happened in the next generation, these are remarkable words. Galsworthy and many another realist are clearly foreshadowed in them; and there are other prophecies not less striking. In an essay on censorship, as if he were foreseeing the work of Shaw, he declares: "There are indications, faint but surely not fallacious, that the rising flood of modern thought will one day sweep the English drama out of the eddy in which it has so long been whirling, to carry it forward on the broad current of the age. It will then need quite other pilotage than that of a Court censor." One of the most notable of his forecasts (still in 1886) was his sketch of an organization like the Theatre Guild. "Can we not conceive a theatre, or rather a wide-spreading theatrical enterprise, founded in the interests of serious art by a body of art-lovers, who should be content with a moderate interest on their investment, and should resolve to apply any

surplus of profit to the extension, solidification, and perfection of their undertaking?" He then outlines the plan of a "guild", with capital subscribed in small shares, a board of financial directors, and a committee of artistic directors. The beginning should be made with "permanent theatres in London, New York, and at least one other American centre." Later there might be many other centres, with visits to cities outside the permanent list. Archer's sketch of a national theatre, written in collaboration with Granville Barker and published in 1907, remains an unrealized ideal.

As critic for the *World* and other papers, Archer continued for more than forty years to review plays with unabated enthusiasm. At intervals he contributed discriminating surveys of recent dramas to such periodicals as the *Fortnightly Review*. Five volumes of selections from these journalistic criticisms were published under the title *The Theatrical World* between 1893 and 1897. Though he remained the chief champion of realism, he never became a doctrinaire who measured by realistic rule of thumb. His taste was remarkably catholic; he gave cordial praise, for instance, to the earlier poetic plays of Stephen Phillips and to the romantic comedies of Barrie. He cultivated what he called "the faculty for making the best of the actual without losing sight of the ideal." This talent was one secret of his influence upon the playwrights, who felt sure of a sympathetic hearing from him for any sincere work. They recognized that, as Pinero said, "his aim was to get the best out of a writer that was in him, and not to be satisfied till he got it." In 1913 Barrie wrote him: "The feeling that you were looking on and wishing people would do things a bit better made me do a bit better. It was no outside influence, but yourself, that made me struggle at plays as I have struggled at books." Archer's forthright thinking, the clearness and vigor of his judgments, and his unfailing honesty gave his criticism an authority unequalled in our time. As early as 1899 Brander Matthews could say: "For a dozen years now Mr. Archer's supremacy among English dramatic critics has been indisputable", and could call him the greatest single influence in the advance of English drama.

<sup>2</sup>The letters from Pinero and Barrie are quoted in Colonel Archer's biography, pp. 165 and 341-2.

## II.

But wide as was the influence of his critical reviews, it was through his work as translator, interpreter, and defender of Ibsen that he did his greatest service both to English drama and to the cause of realism. In his youth he had spent several summers visiting the home of his grandfather in Norway, and had mastered the language. "In October, 1877," he says in one of the prefaces to his edition of Ibsen's plays, "'Pillars of Society' reached me hot from the press; and having devoured it, I dashed off a translation of it in less than a week. It has since cost me five or six times as much work in revision as it originally did in translation . . . I have experienced no other literary emotion at all comparable to the eagerness with which, ever since 1877, I awaited each new play of Ibsen's." In 1881 he joined the Scandinavian Club at Rome in order to meet Ibsen, and thereafter corresponded with him and visited him occasionally. Gosse had preceded him in calling the attention of the English public to Ibsen, and the first translation of an Ibsen play into English was Catherine Ray's version of "Emperor and Galilean". But the "Pillars of Society", in Archer's translation, presented on December 15, 1880, was the earliest of Ibsen's plays to be acted in England, though only one performance was given. Apparently the piece excited little curiosity; the impact of Ibsen's influence on the English theatre did not begin to be felt until 1889, when "A Doll's House" was produced at the Novelty Theatre. Meanwhile, beginning in 1888, Archer's versions of Ibsen's prose plays were appearing, and in 1891 the production of "Ghosts" and "Hedda Gabler" led, as Archer later said, "to such an outburst of foul-mouthed abuse in the newspapers as has seldom disgraced the name of criticism." The veteran critic, Clement Scott, was the most influential of the attackers; and Archer, A. B. Walkley, and Shaw were the chief of counsel for the defence. Archer, however, was compelled to protest against Shaw's misinterpretation of Ibsen as the preacher of a social gospel: Shaw even classed him as a Socialist, and thus provoked a denial from Ibsen himself. In an amusing article in the *Fortnightly Review* for July, 1893, Archer made an anthology of the abuse showered upon Ibsen and his defenders by the critics of most of the influential journals, and quietly pointed out the large



and increasing sales of the prose plays and the financial success of recent Ibsen performances, allowing the anti-Ibsenites to draw their own conclusions. The critical battle went on for several years, Archer's contributions being as superior to those of his opponents in fairness and temper as they were in critical acumen.

But his admirable translations of the plays with his brief and illuminating introductions did far more than his controversial articles to win the battle for Ibsen. In 1891 five volumes of the translations were in print, including all the plays written in prose up to that time. "Peer Gynt" was soon added, in a verse translation by Archer and his brother Charles, and "Brand" and "Love's Comedy" in the excellent versions of C. H. Herford. The later prose pieces were translated as they appeared; the early "Feast at Solhoug", part verse and part prose, and the volume of preliminary sketches called "From Ibsen's Workshop" were added to succeeding editions. The collection finally included all of Ibsen's dramatic work except four early, prentice pieces. Of the twenty-two plays, Archer alone translated nine, and in four others he revised and practically rewrote earlier translations. In three more he collaborated with others, and he supervised and edited the translation of four plays by his wife and brother. He was thus wholly or partly responsible for all the versions except Herford's of "Brand" and "Love's Comedy".

The excellence of Archer's translation is evidenced by the fact that it has had no serious rivals. The Ibsen of the English and American stage and of the English-speaking world is Archer's Ibsen; the great influence of Ibsen upon English and American thought and literature has been exercised largely through Archer. One cannot say how much of that influence has been due to the accessibility of Archer's practically complete and satisfying translation; but certainly the growth of Ibsen's fame in English-speaking countries has been greatly accelerated. No translation into English of the work of any foreign dramatist, ancient or modern, has been so widely acted or read. Miss Miriam Franc, in her study of Ibsen in England, goes so far as to declare: "It was the astonishing popularity of the translations of Ibsen that brought into general esteem in England the custom of printing and reading plays." Archer's version has made Ibsen as familiar to read-

ers of English as Shaw or Galsworthy; it has already become an English classic.

The great distinction of Archer's translations is that they combine a large measure of colloquial naturalness and ease with imaginative vigor and with scrupulous fidelity to the original. It was this last virtue which Archer valued most highly, and which he unceasingly strove to attain. "My fellow workers and I," he said "have done all that lay in our power to represent, as literally as difference of idiom would allow, every finest shade of the poet's meaning." As Mr. Shaw says: "Undistracted by Ibsen's discussion, he went straight for his poetry, and reproduced every stroke of imagination in a phraseology that invented itself *ad hoc* in his hands." He was keenly conscious of his shortcomings: "I can scarcely open one of the volumes at random without coming upon some passage which if it were possible I would fain amend. My only comfort lies in the knowledge that if I made the alteration today, and turned back to it a year hence, I should probably wish to amend it back again." His answer to a critic who complained of his rendering of a passage in "The Master Builder" is typical of his strict fidelity to his original. His critic says: "'Duty! Duty! Duty!' Hilda once exclaims in a scornful outburst. 'What a short, sharp, stinging word!' But in the original she cries out, 'Pligt! Pligt! Pligt!' and the very word stings and snaps." Archer admits the inadequacy of the translation, but observes: "For the term used by Hilda and for the idea in her mind, there is only one possible equivalent: 'Duty', . . . It might be possible to adapt Hilda's phrase to the English word, and say, 'It sounds like the swish of a whiplash', or something to that effect. But this is a sort of freedom which, rightly or wrongly, I hold inadmissible. Once grant the right of adaptation, even in small particulars, and it would be impossible to say where it should stop." Possibly in this instance Archer was overscrupulous; but if this is a vice, it is one that we would not exchange for the virtues of most translators. What we want in a translation is the author, not the translator's effort to improve on him; and Archer's willingness to sacrifice, if necessary, effectiveness or neatness of phrase to fidelity is the best possible guarantee that he is giving us what we want.

Archer was also a pioneer in translating Hauptmann, his version of "Hannele" (1894) being the first of Hauptmann's plays to ap-

pear in English. His translation of Eduard Brandes's "A Visit" remains the only text of that dramatist available to English readers. In the field of criticism he collaborated in translating Georg Brandes's influential *William Shakespeare*. But it is the translation of Ibsen which of all Archer's works seems likely to endure longest.

### III.

Of his other books, probably *Play-Making* and *The Old Drama and the New* will prove to have most lasting interest. *Play-Making* is more carefully written and finished than many of Archer's works, and it had the benefit of criticism and comments from several of his friends among the dramatists; much of this is included in the text and foot-notes. Though published more than twenty years ago (1912), so that it could not take account of such developments as expressionism, it remains by far the most readable and satisfactory general treatment in English of the difficult subject of dramatic technique. Most books which attempt the subject are of an abysmal dullness; Archer's is written so well that it may be read through without pain almost at a sitting. Archer's conservatively liberal point of view is the right one for such a book; and his enormous knowledge of dramatic literature and his wide personal acquaintance with playwrights gave him a store of apt and fresh illustrative material. In the course of the discussion many bits of information not available elsewhere come to light; for example, that in Maeterlinck's original plan for "Monna Vanna" Prinzivalle's sensational demand was not imposed upon the heroine. "Giovanna went of her own motion to appeal to his clemency; and her success was so great that her husband, on her return, could not believe that it had been won by avowable means." Incidental to the discussion of principles there is much penetrating criticism of plays and authors; occasionally there is advocacy of some debatable but challenging idea, such as the theory that English drama has suffered a serious handicap through the continued indirect influence of Euphuism with its artificial rhetoric and wit.

*The Old Drama and the New* (1923) was Archer's last book, and in more than one sense it fittingly crowns his work. In the form of a course of semi-popular lectures, it is at once a historical survey of English drama, and a defense of the new drama which

he had prophesied and fostered. It is more than a defense; it carries the war into the enemy's country. Archer's main thesis is that the drama of the preceding thirty years is superior to that of any earlier period in the history of the English theatre except the Elizabethan, and if Shakespeare be left out of account, it is superior (he says, "at least equal", but he means more than equal) to the rest of Elizabethan drama. He believes that, chiefly through the influence of Charles Lamb, the Elizabethan playwrights have been grossly overestimated for more than a century; and he sets out to demonstrate and correct this error. He treats the Restoration playwrights in similar fashion and after a survey of the doldrums of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, proceeds to give an admirable account of the achievements of recent drama.

Obviously such a book can not be recommended as an impartial history of English drama. The author has an axe to grind; but it happens to be one that badly needed grinding, and he gives it a sharp edge. His main contention, though open to question at some points, is not only defensible but extremely valuable as a corrective to current and orthodox estimates. To a reader who has a fair acquaintance with the generally accepted views, Archer's book is immensely stimulating; it will force him to re-examine and weigh his opinions, and will show him the clay feet of many an idol. It is true that Archer's zeal to dust the jackets of the Elizabethans has led him into occasional unfairness to them. He says, for example, of "The Maid's Tragedy": "The cruel fooling of Amintor, who marries Evadne only to be told with bitter contempt that his function is to serve as a cloak for her amour with the King—this basis of the whole play is incredible. What woman in her senses, however cynical, however abandoned, would select a passionate lover to play such a trick on?" But Amintor is not Evadne's passionate lover; on the contrary he has recently broken his engagement to another girl to marry Evadne at the King's command. Such injustice in a critic as fair-minded and honest as Archer is striking evidence of what havoc a thesis can make with criticism. But in spite of such lapses, Archer's destructive analysis of a number of famous plays, such as "The Duchess of Malfi" and "Philaster", is sound, so far as it goes, and salutary.

The most serious weakness of the book is not in occasional overzealous attacks on particular plays or authors, but in the theory



which Archer constructs as a foundation for his thesis. Almost from the beginning, he finds two conflicting elements in drama, which he calls the "imitative" and the "lyrical or rhetorical" elements. The evolution of drama has consisted of the disentangling of these two strands, and the gradual rejection of the lyrical or rhetorical one. Elizabethan drama, in which the two elements are inextricably mingled, is a "mixed" art form; "the modern realistic drama is a pure and logical art form". So far, so good; the theory may be attackable, but it is at least suggestive. Archer, however, adds the entirely gratuitous assumption, for which of course he can offer no proof, that a "pure and logical" art form is intrinsically better than a "mixed" one; that is, he begs the question by taking it for granted that there is some artistic virtue in "purity" and "logic". The fallacy is worth pointing out, because in one form or another it has vitiated a good deal of otherwise competent criticism of drama. It was Archer's controversial purpose that betrayed him; in his normal state he knew as well as any one that there is no artistic merit in sticking to the purity of the *genre*. If there were, "Gorboduc", a relatively "pure" type, would belong to a higher class of drama than "Lear". Incidentally, Archer neglects the strong tendency in recent drama to run away from the "pure" form of realism to various new mixtures such as symbolism and expressionism. The fact is that when we are tired of a "pure" form, we demand a "mixed" one, and *vice versa*.

Fortunately Archer did not rely exclusively on this deductive argument with a false major premise; but his use of it seriously weakens his case. Nevertheless *The Old Drama and the New* is likely to remain an important contribution to the history of the English theatre. Like *Play-Making*, it is immensely readable; and its revaluation of old values from a fresh and stimulating point of view has already given it wide influence. One can trace it, for example, at many points in Walter Prichard Eaton's excellent popular manual, *The Drama in English*.

#### IV.

In *Play-Making*, Archer, with his usual candor and humor, had undertaken to answer the question: "How comes it that so many people—and I among the number—who could not write a play to

save their lives, are eager to tell others how to do so?" He had admitted that if he had the power, he should "write plays instead of writing about them." Nine years later "The Green Goddess" was scoring its great success in New York,—a success which was repeated in London and continued for years on the screen. It is somewhat singular that a critic who had publicly declared himself incapable of writing a play should produce one which gained a popular triumph. Mr. Shaw's explanation is that the play was based on a dream, and that "the complexes which inhibited him from writing effective plays when he was awake did not operate when he was asleep". The oddest aspect of the affair, however, is not the success of "The Green Goddess", but its character. It was about the last sort of play that Archer's friends and readers would have expected of him. The prophet of realism for forty years, he made his fortune at sixty-five as the author of a romantic thriller. The puzzle is heightened at first glance by the fact that the three plays published after Archer's death are all costume pieces; two of them have highly romantic plots and are written in blank verse. The most probable explanation seems to be the simple one that Archer, like many writers, admired most the sort of thing he could not do. The mutual admiration of Hawthorne and Trollope for each other's novels is a case in point. Archer thought he could not write dialogue, by which I suppose he meant realistic dialogue. The fact that the creative side of his mind carried him toward romance made him set an even higher value on realism.

The two plays in verse just mentioned are reworkings of Elizabethan plots, and owe their inspiration to Archer's studies for *The Old Drama and the New*. He tries to relate them to his critical creed by explaining that they are really "dramatic criticism operating, not by precept, but by example." In other words, he applies the methods of modern technique to the subjects of Middleton's "The Changeling" and Massinger's "The Great Duke of Florence" in the hope of freeing them from "the technical and spiritual crudities of a barbarous age." But the fact seems to be that the subjects fascinated him. The experiment is an interesting one, and in the case of "Lidia" ("The Great Duke") results in a very charming though decidedly artificial comedy. As for "Beatriz Juana" ("The Changeling"), it is indeed a better con-

structed play than its original; but the flashes of imagination which light up the Elizabethan tragedy are missing, and the life has gone out of the characters. The third play in the volume, "Martha Washington", turns its back even on Archer's theories of technique; it is a series of loosely related scenes, with only the slightest dramatic value. Its real excuse is Archer's desire, as a good liberal, to pay a tribute to Washington.

Archer's liberalism is the source of his more important books on subjects not connected with literature, which range over a surprisingly wide field. He had always a special and friendly interest in America. *America Today* (1899) is an acute journalistic account of his impressions on a visit to this country, with an excellent critical section on our literature. *Through Afro-America* (1910) is a sympathetic study of the race problem in the southern states, based on a journey through the South and on extensive reading. *India and the Future* (1918) is mercilessly clear-sighted in its exposure of the flaws and weaknesses of the Indian character; it anticipates in some ways *Mother India* without the sensationalism of that work. Yet Archer urges the policy of preparing the country for ultimate self-government through education and the gradual granting of political power. But perhaps the best of these non-literary books is the biography of Francisco Ferrer, the Spanish radical educator who fell before a firing squad at Barcelona in 1909, and whose ideas the new Spanish republic is beginning to put into practice. Thoroughly impartial yet sympathetic, Archer gives us a living portrait of the man, with his idealism, his naive dogmatism, and his "high unflinching courage". In these political and biographical works Archer seemed drawn to subjects which remain alive today; in politics as in drama, he had an instinct for what would interest the future.

His industry was enormous; I have not even mentioned his useful editions of the dramatic criticism of Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, G. H. Lewes, and Forster, or his critical prefaces to Congreve and Farquhar, or his admirable biography of Macready, or his *Masks and Faces*, a study of the psychology of acting, or his survey of *Poets of the Younger Generation* (1902), or his *Real Conversations*. The last two demand a word of comment. In the introduction to the book on poetry, Archer makes a frank confession of his poetical tastes and prejudices, in order to make it possible for his readers

to allow for them. The example might well be widely followed. He is not so good a critic of poetry as of drama; he errs on the side of overpraise, but he praises well the best poets in his list of thirty-three,—Francis Thompson, and Yeats, and A. E. Housman, and Kipling. A passage which he quotes from his own review of *Barrack Room Ballads*, written in 1892, is an instance of his occasional uncanny foresight. He predicts the course of poetry in the coming generation, much as he had predicted the course of drama a few years earlier. "The New Poetry . . . will take contemporary life for its province, and will bring to bear upon it a novel directness of vision and frankness of purpose. It will look for the characteristic term—the *mot propre*—rather than the graceful, the consecrated phrase . . . Beauty and charm . . . it will seek, not in elegance of subject or elaborate finish, but in rightness of touch and vitality of workmanship." The man who could see this in the year of Tennyson's death, at the beginning of the yellow nineties, has earned the right to be called a prophet.

In *Real Conversations* Archer tried the experiment of setting down, as accurately as he could, with necessary omissions and rearrangements, the record of some of his talks with his friends. The interest of the conversations is naturally uneven, but the best of them—those with Thomas Hardy, George Moore, W. S. Gilbert, Professor Masson, and Sidney Lee—would be well worth reprinting today. Incidentally, the book is a sort of memorial of Archer's capacity for friendship. Reserved and by nature unexpressive as he was, the circle of his friends and intimates was astonishingly wide and varied. Some of Robert Louis Stevenson's best letters were addressed to him. Pinero and Stephen Phillips are among his interlocutors in *Real Conversations*. He was an early adviser of Granville Barker, and has recorded entertainingly in *The Old Drama and the New* his perplexity over Barker's earlier plays, and his huge delight in "The Voysey Inheritance." Ibsen, W. D. Howells, Henry James, J. M. Barrie, Gilbert Murray, W. E. Henley, and Francis Thompson were among his friends and correspondents. He was the intimate of Bernard Shaw from the time the two came as young men to London until his death.

In a charming sketch of Archer's personality written as a foreword to the posthumously published *Three Plays*, Mr. Shaw has created a lasting memorial of this friendship. He tells how, in



different ways, Archer was instrumental in giving him a start both as a critic and as a playwright. "Finding me full of literary ability but ridiculously incapable of obtaining literary employment and desperately in need of it, he set me on my feet as a critical journalist by simply handing me over a share of his own work, and making excuses for having deputed it until the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *World* . . . accepted the deputy as the principal." Mr. Shaw relates in detail the story of the attempted collaboration with Archer from which (after the partnership broke down) "Widowers' Houses" finally resulted, and which was the beginning of his career as a dramatist. He gives us a singularly exact and vivid impression of Archer's appearance, speech, manner, personality; his reserve, his humor, his almost quixotic sense of honor, his fine magnanimity. Just before Archer went to the hospital for the operation which resulted in his death, he wrote Bernard Shaw: "I thank you from my heart for forty years of good comradeship." And Shaw speaks of him as "a friend of whom after more than forty years I have not a single unpleasant recollection, and whom I was never sorry to see or unready to talk to . . . When I returned to an Archerless London," he concludes, "it seemed to me that the place had entered on a new age in which I was lagging superfluous. I still feel that when he went he took a piece of me with him." Shaw's disagreement with Archer's theory of drama prevents him from doing full justice to the critic; but the man lives and will live in Shaw's masterly portrait.

by J. P. Stoakes

## NOT ALL VICTORIANS WERE EMINENT

ONE of Max Beerbohm's drawings represents Coventry Patmore kneeling before the Rossettis, vehemently preaching that "a teapot is not worshipful for its form and colour, but as a sublime symbol of domesticity." The drawing is scarcely a caricature of the poet who in "The Angel in the House" ventured to celebrate, quite chastely, the joys of married love. Rather, it seems to penetrate to the essential truth, not only about Coventry Patmore, but about the whole Victorian age in which he lived. It was an era of cosy domesticity, an era when the word "family" in the title of a book or name of a household appliance was a sure passport to obsequious reviews and wide sale. It was the age of Family Prayers, Family Bibles, Family Shakespeares, Household Words, Home Chat, Family This, and Home That. This deification of the domestic is commonly regarded as a chief mark of Victorianism.

Coventry Patmore did not stand alone as the poet of the Family and the Home. Felicia Hemans in "The Voice of Home to the Prodigal" assures the wanderer that a place is still kept for him at his father's board, and she is obviously puzzled by his persistent vagabondage. "The Homes of England" fairly oozes domestic enthusiasm. The homes are classified as stately, merry, and blessed, but all are fair and free. The stately homes are surrounded by ancestral trees, and swans glide past on convenient streams, while the humbler homes peep forth from the midst of orchards as fearlessly as little birds from beneath their eaves. The same authoress favored her contemporaries with a long and very dreadful poem, "The Domestic Affections", in which the wreaths of glory encircling the brow of genius are conclusively exhibited as mere tinsel if unassociated with the "sweet endearments of domestic ties". Another poetess, Eliza Cook, chanted in verse her love for an old arm-chair. In fact "Home, Sweet Home" might be regarded as the theme-song of the entire age.

But in spite of its popular acceptance this is not the complete story of the Victorian attitude toward the home. Blind reverence for domestic sanctities is certainly not the note of some of Browning's best known poems, "In a Gondola", for instance, or "The Statue and the Bust", or *The Ring and the Book*, or "Respectability". Charles Dickens in *Hard Times* urged the right of the poor to inexpensive divorce. Meredith questioned the advisability of parental absolutism in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*. And it was a Victorian, Samuel Butler, who wrote what must still be regarded as the most caustic attack in English fiction on the cant of Home and Family. "Why should the generations overlap one another at all?" he asks. "Why cannot we be buried as eggs in neat little cells with ten or twenty thousand pounds each wrapped round us in Bank of England notes, and wake up, as the spex wasp does, to find that its papa and mamma have not only left ample provision at its elbow, but have been eaten by sparrows some weeks before?" The plight of Ernest Pontifex as long as he lived under the paternal roof may have been fairly common in the nineteenth century, but is it utterly unknown today? Ernest's parents, Theobald and Christina, were merely trying to realize the domestic ideal of the time; even today sound ideals may be misapplied by the insensitively ignorant.

In actual life and among prominent people the domestic ideal, after all an ideal is not in itself contemptible, was frequently realized with an enviable completeness. Disraeli, that incurable romantic, seems to have been entirely happy with the elderly and eccentric widow whom he married. When someone impertinently suggested that he had married her for her money, the old lady proudly replied, "If he had the chance again, he would do it for love." William Gladstone, Sir Robert Peel, and John Stuart Mill were romantically happy in their married lives. An unusual education had almost stifled all emotion in the latter and left him to observers little more than a two-legged thinking machine, yet he approximates poetry in recording his brief union with the widow of his friend Taylor: "For seven and a half years that blessing was mine; for seven and a half only! I could say nothing that could describe, even in the faintest manner, what that loss was and is. But because I know she would have wished it, I endeavor to

make the best of what life I have left, and to work on for her purposes with such diminished strength as can be derived from thoughts of her, and communion with her memory."

In the love of Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning the Victorian age supplied the world with a romance fit to rank with the greatest. Browning's love, like that of Mill, endured beyond the death of his wife, and led the poet into an act he later regretted—the publication of the notorious verses to Edward FitzGerald whom he mistakenly regarded as having insulted the memory of Elizabeth Barrett. But no triumph of married love in the Victorian era is more conspicuous than that of the Queen herself and her beloved Prince Consort. Perhaps, after all, those who feel called upon to ridicule her constancy to his memory throughout her long widowhood, a constancy that went even to the extent of keeping his room exactly as if he were alive, are not entirely to be envied.

## II.

Smug self-satisfaction out of the home as well as in it is a second charge in the popular indictment of the Victorians. To Macaulay probably belongs the dubious honor of being the best representative of this smugness on a national scale, this complacent belief in the superiority not only of the British but of the nineteenth century. Reverence for the empire and the age is added to reverence for family. G. K. Chesterton declares that Macaulay always wrote as though the defeat of a British regiment would be a violation of the laws of God. Certainly Macaulay in the third chapter of his history, in which he contrasts the state of England in 1685 with its condition in his own day one hundred and fifty years later, exults over the superiority of the nineteenth century in terms that would be scarcely justifiable even if every citizen in 1840 had had two cars in his garage.

The best of his own day placed beside the worst of the seventeenth century makes the age of the founding of the Royal Society of Science, the age of Locke, Newton, and Dryden look primitive, even savage. Macaulay found it convenient to omit from his tabulation the Manchester Massacre, the Corn Law Riots, and the Chartist movement of the nineteenth century. Looking about him in 1845 Macaulay saw that England had railroads and steam-



ships and that her people, or some of them, had better houses, better food, and cheaper clothing. A peasant in the nineteenth century, Macaulay declared, could enjoy luxuries denied to kings two hundred years before. Therefore, he concluded, everybody must be happy, and no paean could be too extravagant.

According to Macaulay, it was the Baconian doctrine of Utility and Progress that had made this extraordinary advance, and hence to Bacon, as the formulator of the doctrine, all reverence was due, while for the impracticable idealism of the ancient philosophers contempt would be a generous portion. The philosophers aimed higher than Bacon, but they achieved less. "To make men perfect was no part of Bacon's plan. His humble aim was to make imperfect men comfortable." If forced to choose between the first shoemaker and the author of the three books on anger, "we pronounce," Macaulay writes, "for the shoemaker. It may be worse to be angry than to be wet. But shoes have kept millions from being wet; and we doubt whether Seneca ever kept anybody from being angry." Preferring shoes, realized and on his feet, to ideals, unrealized and remote, Macaulay could see little reason for discontent. He does admit, however, that there is constant improvement precisely because there is constant discontent, but it seems clear from the tone of his writing that he regards discontent in the nineteenth century as an unnecessary and irrelevant virtue.

In poetry, Alfred Tennyson, at least during the first half of his career, declared himself strongly in favor of Utility and Progress. In one of his earliest poems the hero forsakes his palace of art for a humble cottage in the vale where he may labor sympathetically by the side of human beings previously despised. The disappointed lover in "Locksley Hall" finds solace for his emotional frustration in striving under the banner of progress for the realization of "airplanes grappling in the central blue",—an ideal the achievement of which has not tended to reduce the number of disappointed lovers. An international war provides an avenue of integration for the shattered personality of the hero of "Maud". In *The Idylls of the King*, however, the knights of King Arthur are not so wise. In aspiring to a sight of the Grail they perforce neglect the earthly tasks for which they are fitted and so contribute to the downfall of the Round Table. But on a less aristo-

cratic plane the poet's northern farmer betokens allegiance to the ideals of Utility and Progress when he wonders on his death-bed whether God knows what he is about, taking him, just when the squire needs him for the harvest.

But the complacency of Macaulay and the faith of Tennyson are modest beside the statement of J. A. Roebuck, the politician: "I look around me and ask, What is the state of England? I ask you whether the world over, or in past history, there is anything like it? Nothing! I pray God that our unrivalled happiness may last." It would seem that Mr. Gregsbury in *Nicholas Nickleby*, whose form dilated, eye glistened, breast heaved, heart swelled, and bosom burned whenever he called to mind the greatness and glory of England, was not without a counterpart in real life.

If Macaulay errs in regarding shoemakers and other apostles of efficiency and success as superior in importance to the greatest speculative thinkers of the past; if he errs in preferring, because of its mechanical dexterity, the 19th century to the 17th; if he achieves a complacent optimism at the cost of ignoring all unfavorable evidence—then let us continue to reject him as inadequate, superficial, and vain. But Macaulay is not the whole Victorian age. His own age evolved the antidote. It is not the 20th century but the 19th that has produced the greatest opponent to all for which he stands.

Macaulay fits admirably into the conventional estimate of the Victorian age, but Carlyle, rightly understood, does not fit into that estimate at all. "Soul is not synonymous with stomach", said Carlyle; and it is his elaboration of this point of view that has made Macaulay indigestible for us. To the rationalism that saw nothing miraculous in nature, Carlyle retorted that all was miraculous. If the sun were to rise for the first time tomorrow morning, its appearance would certainly be called a miracle. Is it any less so because it has risen many times before? It is a clever trick of custom, says Carlyle, this persuading us that the miraculous, by simple repetition, ceases to be miraculous. But man ought not to be deceived by it. To stretch forth his hand and seize the sun would be miraculous. But many times a day he stretches forth his hand, clutches things, even uses them. "Art thou a grown baby, then, to fancy that the Miracle lies in miles of distance, or in pounds avoirdupois of weight; and not to see that

the true inexplicable God-revealing Miracle lies in this, that I can stretch forth my hand at all?" Man is a minnow acquainted with every cranny and pebble of his native creek, but does he understand the Ocean Tides and Currents? As for democracy, what is it but the despair of finding any heroes to govern? It is government by the millions, "twenty-seven millions, mostly fools." Carlyle did not, like Macaulay, ignore the problems made acute by the Industrial Revolution. Over-production, for instance, is the sole subject of a chapter in *Past and Present*. Are there too many shirts? "Well, that is a novelty, in this intemperate Earth, with its nine-hundred millions of bare backs." The situation is no longer a novelty in fact though it still is in reason. It was nearly one hundred years ago when Carlyle saw, as Ruskin did after him, something anomalous in talk of over-production while people were hungry and cold. Neglect of the lessons of these teachers has cost the world in recent years a monstrous tuition of pain.

Macaulay thought that all men should be happy in so splendid an age; Carlyle knew that most men were not. Self-fulfillment seemed to Macaulay admirable and desirable; Carlyle saw that men's egotistic insatiability led him to multiply indefinitely his wants and thus, by widening the gap between what he had and what he wanted, deepen his misery. The sensible plan, thought Carlyle, is to bring your wants within the limits of reason; then you will not be ever galloping toward a receding horizon. "Fancy that thou deservest to be hanged in a hair-halter, it will be a luxury to die in hemp."

Lord Melbourne once remarked that he wished he were as cocksure of one thing as Macaulay was of everything. The peer was but one of a host of Victorians who were unable to perceive how the efficiency of the shoemaker eliminated the philosopher. Even Tennyson toward the end of his life became a lost leader for the creed of Utility and Progress. He had begun by hinting the superiority of a communal kitchen to a palace of art, but the death of Hallam plunged him in doubt; still he faintly trusted the larger hope. But sixty years after, Locksley Hall was definitely crumbling. "When was age so crammed with menace? madness? written, spoken lies?" he shrieks. If the age preaches equality, it is afflicted by the delusion that the lion is no larger than the cat.

Does the age shout Freedom? It is a freedom to slay herself. Is the age pure? Authors are ripping their brothers' vices open, stripping their own foul passions bare; budding boyhood is fed with the drainage of literary sewers, and maiden fancies are set wallowing in the troughs of Zolaism. Are we to rejoice in science?

Is it well that while we range with Science, glorying in the Time,  
City children soak and blacken soul and sense in city slime?  
There among the glooming alleys Progress halts on palsied feet,  
Crime and hunger cast our maidens by the thousand on the street.

"Forward" once rang the voices, and among them his own, but now "let us hush this cry of 'Forward' till ten thousand years have gone." It seems a bit difficult to discover in such Victorian sentiments by the most prominent Victorian poet any particular marks of Victorian smugness.

### III.

It is not domestic sentimentality, nor sociological optimism, but reticence in all relating to sex that is connoted most inevitably by the term "Victorian". Illustrations of the Victorian fear of sex vary from the famous "We are not amused!" of the Queen herself to the tale of two Victorian ladies who refused to rescue a man from drowning when it became apparent that he was naked.

No one today considers Charlotte Brontë a shocking author, but there was public outcry at the scene in *Jane Eyre* in which Jane listens to, but promptly refuses, Rochester's proposal that she become his mistress. In the second edition, 1847, the author declared in her preface: "Conventionality is not morality. Self-righteousness is not religion." This of course did not save her, and in 1848 the *Quarterly Review* declared of her: "She must be one who for some sufficient reason has long forfeited the society of her sex."

Not all Victorian authors were so rebellious as Charlotte Brontë. Thackeray, for instance, recognized and accepted the restrictions of his day. In the preface to *Pendennis* he said, "Since the author of *Tom Jones* was buried, no writer of fiction among us has been permitted to depict to his utmost power a *man*." Certainly he leaves the relationship of Pendennis and Fanny Bolton discreetly vague. In *Vanity Fair* it is worthy of note that at no



time are we given a scene in which Becky Sharp and Lord Steyne are alone together; in fact, in about so many words Thackeray declares Becky innocent in spite of all probability, human experience, and the thousand pound bank-note that Lord Steyne gave her. While Thackeray was editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*, Anthony Trollope, in what must have been a moment of unaccountable exuberance, submitted a story about a gentleman who was minded to run away with a married woman. The editor regretfully turned it down. With a Thackeray to protect him from the rare transgressions of a Trollope, the Victorian reader might feel himself reasonably secure.

William Forsyth, writing in 1871 on novelists of the eighteenth century, found it difficult to discuss *Tom Jones*. A lady once asked him whether he could give her an inkling of the story without sinning against decorum. "The question," writes Mr. Forsyth, "was a delicate one, and I cannot pretend that I answered it satisfactorily. The truth is, that it would be impossible to give an analysis of the novel, or even describe the plot except in the most meagre terms, without offending against the respect due to female delicacy now."

The fear of offending against female delicacy was potent among Victorians. As Mrs. General remarks in *Little Dorrit*, "A truly refined mind will seem to be ignorant of anything that is not perfectly proper, placid, and pleasant." All Victorian young ladies were supposed to have truly refined minds, and Victorian publishers and critics seem to have conspired in the attempt to keep them that way. Sir Walter Trevelyan became offended when Swinburne gave a volume of Balzac to Lady Trevelyan: all French novels were at that time suspect. Swinburne in his notes to *Poems and Ballads* reluctantly confesses that his only fault was in underrating "the evidence which every day makes clearer and clearer, that our time has room only for such as are content to write for children and girls." Trollope praised Thackeray for observing this principle. "No girl," he says, "will ever become bold under his preaching, or taught to throw herself at men's heads."

Toward the end of the century the principle of delicacy was generously extended by at least one critic to include men as well as women. The occasion was the publication of *Jude the Obscure*.

A copy of the book was burned publicly by an ecclesiastic who, as Hardy grimly remarked, could not burn the author. But the final word was reserved for the writer in the *National Review*, who asserted the presence in the book of passages "which will offend men in direct proportion to their manliness, and which all women, save the utterly abandoned, will hurry over with shuddering disgust."

That the art and literature of the Victorian era were consistently but contemptibly adapted to the digestions of young females to the malnutrition of grown men and women is the popular but somewhat mistaken notion. It is based, as usual with popular notions, on partial evidence. To call to mind the Victorian heroine today is usually to think of a Kate Nickleby, an Amelia Sedley, or a Maggie Tulliver. But there was another type of heroine who, because she seldom got into a novel by a great writer, has now been generally forgotten. In her own day, however, she caused much wagging of heads and clicking of tongues. Justin McCarthy, the historian, writing in 1880, describes her:

A style of novel peculiar to this age deserves a word of mention. That is the novel which records the lives, the romplings, the ambitions, the flirtations, and the sufferings of what we may call the Roaring Girl of the Victorian age. With tousled, unkempt hair, disorderly dress, occasionally dirty hands, and lips bubbling over with perpetual slang, this strange young woman has bounced into fiction . . . Perhaps the one merit about this kind of fiction, when it is really honest and at its best, is that it recognizes the fact that women are not a distinct angelic order of beings, but that they have their strong passions and even their coarse desires like men.

Roaring girls with strong passions and coarse desires scarcely fit into the conventional picture of the Victorian female, but as the heroine of novels Mr. McCarthy finds her far outnumbering the demure Amelias. Perhaps, after all, there was some point in Trollope's praising Thackeray for teaching girls to be discreet. Perhaps there was some need of such teaching. It seems as though we today remember the teaching but forget the occasion that called it forth. If Mr. McCarthy is right, it may be that the demure heroine, because of her rarity, was really more exciting to the reader than the Roaring Girls. "Simplicity," as Oscar Wilde re-

marked, "is the last refuge of the complex." Possibly we, and not the Victorians, are the really simple.

After all, the fact that Charlotte Brontë, Swinburne, Rossetti, and Hardy were severely reproached for impropriety by Victorian critics proves more than one thing: it proves, on the one hand, that the critics were offended, but it also proves that they had something to be offended at. Many authors and sometimes the reading public were not so conventional as critics and publishers. Edmund Gosse is authority for the statement that a real factor in the success of Swinburne's *Atlanta* (1865) was reaction against Tennyson's *Enoch Arden* (1864) regarded by many as "an intolerable concession to commonplace ideals." After the scandalous abuse heaped on *Poems and Ballads* in the *Saturday Review*, August 4, 1866, Moxon, the publisher, withdrew it from circulation. Demand, however, was sufficient to justify its reissue by Hotton. And even more significant is the fact that before publication the book had been approved by such eminent Victorians as Lady Trevelyan, D. G. Rossetti, Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Sir Richard Burton, James Whistler, and John Ruskin.

Even Alfred Tennyson once came near falling from grace. His customary treatment of passion is fairly well represented by his Robin Hood, who, wandering in the Greenwood with Maid Marian, is perforce content with "kisses of the soul". Nettled, however, by the vogue of Swinburne, Tennyson inserted an erotic—though not very alarmingly erotic—passage into *The Last Tournament*. He had to suppress it, though, at the agonized request of Messrs. Macmillan, his publishers.

The common belief today that Victorian literature consistently evaded the direct treatment of a sex problem is far from the truth. Mrs. Gaskell's *Ruth* (1853) is the story of a woman who, seduced and deserted, refuses to marry the wealthy Mr. Bellingham when he finally reappears and offers marriage. She no longer loves him and, besides, she refuses to submit her child to the influence of the father she now despises. The theme is substantially the same as that of Stanley Houghton's *Hindle Wakes*, a play that aroused considerable discussion only a few years ago. There were other fictional discussions no less liberal. Lyndall, the heroine of Olive Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm*, urges the advantages of a companionate relationship. And Herminia in Grant Allen's

*The Woman Who Did* flushes with "shame and horror" when the man she loves and is ready to accept proposes so conventional a thing as marriage. Thomas Hardy presented Tess, in spite of her seduction, as a "pure woman".

Charles Dickens, radical enough in treating other problems, is always restrained in treating sex. But even he occasionally ridicules prudery by putting prudish remarks into the mouths of ignorant and comical characters. Martin Chuzzlewit once spoke of a "naked eye". "Mrs. Hominy", writes Dickens, "was a philosopher and an authoress, and consequently had a pretty strong digestion; but this coarse, this indecorous phrase, was almost too much for her. For a gentleman sitting alone with a lady—although the door *was* open—to talk about a naked eye!" And when Bella Wilfer happens to mention her petticoat, her mother reprimands her: "'Neither do I understand,' retorted Mrs. Wilfer with deep scorn, 'how a young lady can mention the garment in the name of which you have indulged. I blush for you'".

The Victorian John Stuart Mill penned a brilliant argument for freedom of expression, an argument as valid now as it was seventy-five years ago. And even Macaulay held on this matter notions generous enough for today. "The whole liberal education of our countrymen," he wrote, "is conducted on the principle that no book which is valuable, either by reason of the excellence of its style, or by reason of the light which it throws on the history, polity, and manners of nations, should be withheld from the student on account of its impurity."

#### IV.

Even during the Victorian age its most cherished optimisms and prejudices were constantly under fire. Patmore and Butler, Macaulay and Carlyle, Dickens and Charlotte Brontë—there is no unanimity of opinion here. The ideals of Family, Empire, and Female Delicacy were cherished, but they were also attacked. The conscious naughtiness of the Nineties was in many ways a typically Victorian reaction to Victorianism, for long before that decade Carlyle had challenged utilitarianism, Newman had deserted Anglicanism, Morris had denounced industrialism, Butler had



written *The Way of All Flesh*, Swinburne had sung of the roses and raptures of Vice, and the Pre-Raphaelites had sown the seed of art for art's sake. Great sport has been had during the last forty years shooting at targets as though they were never shot at before. But signs are not lacking that here and there it begins to be suspected the three decades of the twentieth century are not unquestionably superior in achievement to any three decades of the Victorian era. If the twentieth century sees farther than the nineteenth, it may still be but a pygmy standing on the shoulders of a giant.

We are the last who have any right to gibe at the Victorians. Even if we concede the greatness of their geniuses and restrict our complacent scorn to the Victorian middle classes with their ugly furniture, anti-macassars, bustles, and bicycles, we should still not be clearly justified. Those middle classes bought Tennyson and Tupper, but they did not neglect Swinburne or FitzGerald, Spencer or Darwin. True, there exists today a large public for serious works, but they must be of a kind that promises extensive and immediate intellectual returns. Macaulay's *History of England*, a sound and substantial work for its day, sold 140,000 copies in England alone, nearly as many in America, and was translated almost at once into a dozen languages; the publisher's check to Macaulay for £20,000 is a landmark in publishing history.

The sale of this work is easily matched by that of today's *Outline of History*, but the difference in the quality and character of the two works is significant. Macaulay did not pretend to give for the benefit of indolent minds the whole history of the world, nor even the whole history of England. His history begins with 1685, and he planned to carry it down to about 1800. The four volumes he lived to complete cover only seventeen years; in fact, it has been calculated that to complete it on the scale planned would have required 150 years. Since Macaulay no history dealing on a similar scale with so limited a period can boast of anything like similar sale. Few indeed, as John Macy remarks, are the historians today with the courage to embark on so mammoth an undertaking, and if a few such could be found, it is doubtful whether their readers would much outnumber them.

Well, for better or for worse we have divorced Victorianism. Its optimisms seem cheap, its prejudices silly, and its ideals shallow.

It has been shaken by the New Freedom, stunned by the New Woman, and dispatched by the New Deal, which—just in passing—would not have seemed so new to Carlyle and Ruskin. The cult of Victorianism has been succeeded on the one hand, as Max Eastman puts it, by the Cult of Unintelligibility, and on the other, according to A. R. Thompson, by the Cult of Cruelty. With the barriers down, William Faulkner and Robinson Jeffers are compelled to their extremes simply to find anything that will shock and thrill. Perhaps after our experience in living without barriers we shall find it necessary again to create them. That may be the only way to preserve our thrills. Perhaps Lucy Tantamount, in *Point Counter Point*, was right when she remarked that the Victorians had more fun than we because they had more prohibitions. As to the modern Unintelligibles, well, they are clearly Un-Victorian. Of that at least we may be proud. The Victorians, we may complacently affirm, were not able to be so Unintelligible as we.

And the moral of that is, as the Duchess remarked, “‘Be what you would seem to be’—or if you’d like it put more simply—‘Never imagine yourself not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others that what you were or might have been was not otherwise than what you had been would have appeared to them to be otherwise.’”

But the Victorians *called* it nonsense. They called it *Alice in Wonderland*. They did not look soulfully toward the skies and call it Art.

*by Charles Frederick Harrold*

## EMBATTLED VICTORIANS

**THE WILFRID WARDS AND THE TRANSITION. I. THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.** By Maisie Ward. New York: Sheed and Ward, Inc. 1934. Pp. xii, 428. \$3.75.

**REMINISCENCES OF AN OCTOGENARIAN: 1847-1934.** By the Right Rev. Edmund Arbuthnott Knox, D.D., formerly Bishop of Manchester. London: Hutchinson and Co. 1935. Pp. 336. 18s.

It was to be expected that when the papers of Wilfrid Ward were published, there would be fresh glimpses of a number of the great Victorians. As the friend and biographer of Cardinals Newman and Wiseman, and as the intimate acquaintance of Manning, Vaughan, Tennyson, Huxley, Ruskin, Martineau, and R. H. Hutton, Ward was in a splendid position to view the cross currents of middle and late Victorian thought. As the son of "Ideal" Ward—that boisterous dogmatist so harassing to Newman in the Oxford Movement—he was a living and finely self-conscious link between two utterly different generations, between the generation electrified by Tract XC in 1841 and the men who, in the not-so-distant past, in those now idyllic pre-war years, debated in the "Synthetic Society", in the company of Lord Balfour, Baron von Hügel, Sir Oliver Lodge, G. Lowes Dickinson, F. W. Myers, Professor McTaggart, and G. K. Chesterton. The present volume, one of two or more which will presumably complete a monumental biography, is a combination of narrative and memoir, in which Miss Ward supplies necessary material and considerable editing to a long and incomplete record which Wilfrid Ward left on his death in 1916. It is rich in illuminating anecdote, and provides a valuable mass of primary source-data on a number of personalities, ideas, and movements.

Ward was, as he chose to regard himself, a "liaison officer" between the forces of institutional religion and the intelligent skeptics who retained a receptive attitude toward the claims and appeals of the religious mind. As such, he performed a truly

typical Victorian function, and his relations with Huxley, Hutton, Froude, and other eminent rationalists of the time, throw new light on the long Victorian travail of uncertainty. Ward's memoirs are especially interesting in that they express the minor but highly integrated point of view of intelligent Victorian Roman Catholicism, which was acutely aware of the modern temper and its strength and weakness. He had himself found, he believed, the "time spirit of the century" to reside in the "application of evolution to the field of ideas, of history and sociology, as glimpsed by Condorcet, Kant, and Edmund Burke." The influence of Newman is here too obvious to require comment, though Newman would have rejected Ward's implication that the concept of evolution, in the biological sense of producing novelty, could profitably be applied to the dogmas of the Catholic Church. Throughout the book, the great and informing influence of the great Tractarian is strikingly evident. "All our life together," wrote Mrs. Ward, "was lived under the shadow of Cardinal Newman." This is easily understood when we consider that Ward's objective was, on the whole, identical with Newman's, namely, to promote that dynamic attitude toward religious concepts and dogmas which received its first and tentative impetus in Newman's *Development of Christian Doctrine* in 1845.

Bishop Knox's *Reminiscences* show us another side of the middle and late Victorian era. Born eleven years before Wilfrid Ward—only a year after the repeal of the Corn Laws!—he has had a long and varied experience in Anglican life, and still enjoys a serene old age in Kent. His memoirs present a remarkable picture of mid-Victorian Evangelicalism, viewed from the inside, and from a delightfully personal angle. There are chapters on "The Making of a Mid-Victorian Family", "A Victorian School", "Two Mid-Victorian Churches", "Oxford Education: 1865-1870", "A Country Parish: 1885-1891". Fully one-half of the book is devoted to reminiscences of that way of life which provided the background and the springs of action for Macaulay, Wilberforce, and Shaftesbury. The thought-patterns, the convictions, the religious ideals of a vast segment of the Victorian population are here presented anew and with the voice of a genial survivor.

It is a pleasant exercise of the historical imagination to ac-



company the author through Chapter IV and the uproar that greeted *Essays and Reviews* in 1860, and the failure to secure the excommunication of Bishop Colenso in 1866. In other chapters we are introduced to St. Paul's School in the '50's, and view the turbulent controversies of the '60's through the eyes of one who was then entering maturity.

Both of these volumes have a special value for the student or lover of the decades which fell between Peel's "Great Budget" and the second Jubilee. They add materially to our knowledge of the personal side of the social and intellectual tumult from the days of the Irish famines to the revision of the Prayer Book. They supply us with what no other age, already completely in the past, can supply its students, namely, the living voice of one who has grown up amid its stresses, its exaggerations, its actualities, its atmosphere. They present, from the point of view of two highly intelligent and articulate men, two deeply divergent outlooks, the Roman Catholic and the Evangelical, as they spanned a newly awakened age of inner conflict, and extended into the bored and intellectually defeatist years that have followed the catastrophe of 1914-1918.

*by Clarence Gohdes*

### BOWELS OF GRACE

JOHN BUNYAN MECHANICK PREACHER. By William York Tindall. New York: Columbia University Press. 1934. xii, 309 pp.

That the seventeenth century in England was an era of religious and political controversy all the world of intelligence knows. That such controversy was carried on through pamphlets and tracts even in the lower social orders has often been forgotten. By the grace of a few works which time has examined and approved John

Bunyan is remembered when a thousand of his kind have been overwhelmed by oblivion. Dr. Tindall's purpose in writing *John Bunyan Mechanick Preacher* was to show that the author of *Pilgrim's Progress* was essentially no different from the multitude of controversialists of his day and that the social, economic, and sectarian beliefs which conditioned the minds of the sub-literary folk of his era exerted themselves upon his works. Naturally, then the chief grist for such a mill comes from the minor pamphlets which the God-intoxicated tinker produced, but often passages in his chief opus become more reasonably clear when one follows Dr. Tindall in his attempt to supply the background from which it emerged.

Horse-rubbers, serving-men, merchants, rope-makers, and that sort of lusty canaille felt the fire of a new Pentecost and the agony of the desire for expression. With them Bunyan contended or from them he borrowed—and to them and their like he addressed himself. *Grace Abounding* is merely one of many similar self-written annals of the poor. *A Few Sighs from Hell* is paralleled by a host of tracts, the *Holy War* is an offshot of the Fifth Monarchy movement, and so on. Bunyan belonged to his social level; his works appear more natural when that level is understood. And yet—why is *Pilgrim's Progress* one of the treasures of the literary world? Other studies—too many of them—have undertaken to explain, but Dr. Tindall finds the topic beyond his province. As a result, his book is a kind of antidote to such studies as have neglected the background from which Bunyan emerged; he has shown that the Holy Ghost and Scriptures alone have not produced a classic.

The study of a host of controversial pamphlets written by zealous Muggletonians, Quakers, Brownists, and other such folk is not ordinarily calculated to develop, or to save, a sense of humor. A most interesting feature of Dr. Tindall's work is that he has actually been able to sharpen his wit upon the dull stuff with which he has labored and to write his opinions in a style that is detachedly entertaining. His pointed sentences have a savor of seventeenth-century metaphysical wit. Time and again the ideas impress one with the fact that their author has a clever tongue pressed hard against an ironical check. Delightful, according to

the present writer—albeit the *odium scholasticum* may vent itself in a contrary opinion.

One word for the format of this book. It is splendidly contrived—a magnificent example of the best work of the Columbia Press, and full deserving of the tribute of being selected as one of the fifty most beautiful books of the year.

by John M. McBryde

#### • HIMSELF A WORTHY

THE GREAT DOCTOR FULLER, by Dean B. Lyman. University of California Press. 1935.

This little biography, as the writer informs us in his Preface, is "not merely a story of incident, but also a study of intellect and character and personality". At the same time, Dr. Lyman has taken infinite pains to establish an accurate chronology of Fuller's life and writings. Some readers may possibly feel that in places a disproportionate amount of space has been devoted to the fixing of a date, especially when the biographer at the end of the discussion is sometimes forced to confess that he has had to resort to conjecture and set up a plausible theory. And yet the reader cannot withhold his admiration for Dr. Lyman's honesty, for the patience he has shown, the restraint and nice discrimination, which do not permit the substitution of guesses for proof. On every page it is apparent that Dr. Lyman is in love with his task and is enamored of the good old Doctor, of whom he writes with enjoyment and enthusiasm. So completely has he succeeded in identifying himself with his subject that he is able, without the change of a word to excerpt a passage from Fuller's Epistle Dedicatory to the *Holy War* and use it as his own dedication to Professors Metcalf and

Wilson of the University of Virginia, under whose guidance the work was planned and carried forward.

He leads us, then, as a good biographer should do, to have an affection for "merry, honest, lovable Tom", the country boy who, like Franklin, came to stand before kings, and eventually was appointed Chaplain to Charles II. After telling of his birth and early schooling in a little village in Northamptonshire, he passes on to his Cambridge years, his first pastoral labors in Dorsetshire, and then his removal to London, where he preached in Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's, and all the leading parish churches. Thus in "four or five short years Fuller had raised himself from a position of obscurity in a country parsonage to a position of honorable repute in the greatest city of the nation."

Then came the trial by fire, during the great Civil War. Sympathizing with the King, he was deprived of his position and forbidden to preach. Yet as he was a low churchman, he could understand the point of view of the Presbyterians. He disliked, however, both "the over-ceremoniousness of the Laudian Episcopalians and unceremoniousness of the Independents and Sectaries". Though no time-saver, Fuller was courageous and consistent in adopting a moderate position and in making compromises that did not lead to sacrifice of principle. On the return of the King he was restored to all his rights and privileges and made a Court Chaplain.

In the midst of all the acrimonious religious controversy and bloody conflicts he kept his head clear and his heart free from unchristian bitterness, and devoted himself to meditation and scholarly research. Thus when the Restoration came, he was able to publish his *Church History* and continue his work on his *Worthies of England*, which, however, was not published till after his death. Chiefly on these two great works his subsequent fame has rested. Pepys in his *Diary* tells how he "sat down reading it [the *Worthies*] till it was two o'clock before I thought of the time going."

To-day there are few no doubt who would be so fascinated by the ponderous tomes of The Great Tom Fuller. And yet to the discriminating reader his wit and wisdom have not lost their savor, and his quaint manner of expression is not without its charm. "Whilst the King of Spain guarded the head and heart



of his dominions in Europe," he writes in his sketch of Sir Francis Drake, "he left his long legs in America open to blows." And Queen Elizabeth "had a piercing eye, wherewith she used to touch what mettle strangers were made of who came into her presence" and "she counted it a pleasant conquest with her majestic look to dash strangers out of countenance." When Sir Francis Drake died, "sickness did not so much untie his clothes, as sorrow did rend at once the robe of his mortality asunder." And finally, a school teacher "out of his school is no whit pedantical in carriage or discourse, contenting himself to be rich in Latin; though he doth not jingle with it in every company wherein he comes."

Dr. Lyman not only perceived the need of an accurate, carefully documented life of Fuller, but has admirably filled it, carrying through his task in the spirit of the true scholar and the sympathetic interpreter. His book will, I trust, lead many readers to become acquainted with Fuller's writings, for, says his latest biographer, "those who have not known him there have one of their finest literary friendships yet to make."

*by K. L. Knickerbocker*

### INDISPENSABLE FOR BROWNING

A BROWNING HANDBOOK. By William Clyde De Vane. New York: F. S. Crofts and Co. 1935. Pp. 533.

Browning's poems have proved to be honey-pots sweet to the investigator and the interpreter. The magic is that so many who begin work tentatively, end by becoming encyclopedic. Berdoe, Cooke, and Mrs. Orr have furnished us with complete guides. Others have written from primers to prolegomena in an effort to make easy the task of Browning's readers. In addition and in-

evitably, there have been numerous "contributions toward a better understanding" of the individual poems. A library of comment, row on row, testifies to the earnestness and enthusiasm of more than a generation of Browning's admirers. But if Browning has been lucky in firing numerous readers to a writing pitch, he has not been so fortunate in compelling wise words from them. Many came to praise and stayed to bury him under a friendly but quite deadly mass of interpretation and misinterpretation.

Until the publication of Professor De Vane's *A Browning Handbook* there was scarcely one book on Browning which could be listed as indispensable. Professor De Vane has produced such a book. It should be called *The Browning Handbook*. Now that it is available one would no more venture a serious study of Browning without it than one would undertake a serious safari into Arabia without reference to Doughty.

The *Handbook* opens with a necessarily short biography of the poet. The facts and comments given are sufficiently full to orient the reader for what is to follow: the life of the poet as a poet; the poet with pen in hand, with source material at his elbow. From *Pauline* to *Asolando*, the whole sweep of Browning's long creative period is laid before the reader. In a formal sense, the *Handbook* is non-interpretive, yet, as I shall show, it contains all one needs for a full interpretation of Browning's poems.

With painstaking care Professor De Vane has reviewed, summarized, and made logical all the scholarship devoted to Browning. His book is at once an original work and a narrative bibliography. The originality is manifested in two ways. First, the work of previous scholars has been scanned judiciously; the correct findings have been accepted, the dubious ones doubted, the mistaken ones rejected. By expending a tremendous sum of labor, Professor De Vane has succeeded in stamping his judgments with an authority based ultimately on a combination of his own researches and those of a multitude of other scholars. He has—to use two terms approved by Browning—analysed and synthesized. Secondly, he has added independently and largely to the possibilities of understanding Browning in his most enigmatic and obscure poems. It is here that one may illustrate the service the *Handbook* renders in aiding accurate interpretation.

For example, Professor De Vane is perhaps most brilliant in

tracing the intricate and amazing history of such a poem as *Sordello*—the *enfant terrible* in Browning's garden of verse. The four stages in the composition of this poem are set forth clearly and serve to explain the shifting of the poem from one emphasis to another—ultimately to the (unadmitted) despair of Browning who found the poem unmanageable. The discussion in the *Handbook* has done for *Sordello* what Browning could not—*or perhaps* would not—do: it has made the poem intelligible.

More ingenious and more intrinsically interesting is the study of *Fifine*. Here Professor De Vane's accurate knowledge of Browning's temperament, of his methodical subtlety, leads to an interpretation which links *Fifine* with Rossetti's *Jenny* and establishes a chain of evidence to show that the former poem was a deeply subtle criticism of the latter. Rossetti himself recognized the attack but was thought mad, even by his brother. There no longer is need to question Rossetti's sanity, at least not on this score.

These two examples chosen from the volume before me serve to illustrate an important fact about the volume as a whole: the more difficult the poem and the more entangled the problems it presents, the more adequate and satisfying is the discussion of that poem. None of the discussions is weak. Even in the paragraphs introduced by the conjectural phrase "I think", one is impressed by the solid reasoning behind the thinking process.

Imperfections may exist. After reading the book through with care, I emerge with *one* possible error in inference and with perhaps a half dozen points about which one might argue. As for the rest, it would take Professor De Vane himself to find any real flaws in *A Browning Handbook*.

by Austin Warren

## CREATIVE IMITATION

PLAGIARISM AND IMITATION DURING THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE; A STUDY IN CRITICAL DISTINCTIONS. By Harold Ogden White. Harvard U. Press. Pp. 209. 1935.

Mimesis has not proved the least ambiguous of critical terms, and Elizabethan as well as continental theorists used it now of 'following Nature', now of 'following' Homer, or Ovid, or Juvenal, or Petrarch. It is the latter doctrine, that of creative imitation, to which Mr. White devotes his well-organized and crisply written volume.

The first chapter very ably expounds the Greek and Roman attitude, assembles and interprets the relevant utterances of the Renaissance Italian and French critics. Piracy and false kinds of borrowing—the unacknowledged, the unselective, the basely literal, and the superficial—received due chastisement; but erudition, the use of models, the assimilation and the imaginative adaptation of earlier and foreign literature: these were another matter, and they found universal commendation. Two oft-repeated metaphors identified the servile imitator with the Horatian crow bedecked in peacock's feathers, the creative imitator with the bee who 'transforms the nectars of the most varied flowers into honey.' The distinction between improper and proper imitation may almost be put down as pragmatic; if one succeeds in integrating the borrowed and the personal, if one enriches and improves his *donnée*, than one has vindicated himself; one is culpably a thief only when he demonstrates himself unable to turn his 'findings' to good account.

Subsequent chapters, constituting the body of the book, collect and interpret the doctrine of creative imitation as propounded by lyric and dramatic poets and the critics of the English Renaissance. The Elizabethans and Jacobean held, pertinaciously, to the classical doctrine as formulated by Horace, Quintilian, Longinus.



'Not only were Englishmen from 1500 to 1625 without any feeling analogous to the modern attitude toward plagiarism; they even lacked the word until the very end of that period.' His central thesis is abundantly demonstrated; but Mr. White's keen wits find employment chiefly and most strikingly in the interpretation of ambiguous controversies and isolated utterances, apparent exceptions to the rule. Doubtless he has made his case somewhat too neat: men, especially pamphleteers, must then as now have occasionally been guilty of muddled minds. That their language was sometimes inexactly and shiftingly used their advocate admits, but with the skill of a legal mind he undertakes to reduce their theories, as distinct from their diction, to a nice consistency. In no case, however, is the text cited insusceptible of the interpretation put upon it; and one cannot dissent from the method of judging the sense of the obscure by the clear,—the baffling sentence by its context both in the work cited and in its contemporaries. As an example of White's exegesis at its best, one may instance his treatment of Greene's attack on Shakespeare and his distinction between the method of Petty and Painter.

The virtual unanimity of all the testimonies—save for those of Churchyard, Wither, and Taylor, to whom White assigns a convincing motive—for deviation—makes the volume somewhat monotonous reading. It must be said, however, that White affords what variety he may by the frequent interludes in analysis of relevant Elizabethan controversies, those between Nash and Harvey, Marston and Jonson, Stephens and Webster.

Careful in scholarship, lucid in exposition, this is a book to which the specialist can refer with confidence; its thesis, while not new, has never before been so competently and completely demonstrated. The doctrine historically studied is, however, of more than historical importance; and one could wish for an essay comprising the argument of the book, incorporating a half hundred of its aptest quotations, and concluded by a full *catena* of authorities: it would be of use to all students of English literature.

Very much alive during the Restoration and the eighteenth century, periods which fall beyond the scope of White's book, the *practice* of 'creative imitation' never quite disappeared, even in the effulgence of nineteenth century 'originality'; but the Romantic

Movement initiated the still current exaltation of avowed novel-ties in thought, theme, and 'fable', and the corresponding wide and vague charges of plagiarism.

The critical theory of T. S. Eliot and still more his practice in *Waste Land*, the *Cantos* of Pound, and the *Ulysses* of Joyce may not be attributable to Horace's *Ars Poetica*; but they distinctly betoken a return, with whatever 'modern improvements', to an older view of the whole matter. Pope would have understood, better than many a bewildered middle-aged reader, those 'imitative' lines so familiar to our adolescents:

But at my back from time to time I hear  
The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring  
Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.

To write as though none ever penned before us is not the only recipe for 'originality'.

by Frances W. Knickerbocker

### EPITAPH ON PURITANISM

THE LAST PURITAN: A Memoir in the Form of a Novel. By George Santayana. Charles Scribner's Sons. 1936. Pp. 602.

Twenty-four years after his departure from us, Santayana has revisited in memory the land of his long sojourn. *The Last Puritan* is not a revised version of *Character and Opinion in the United States*, that penetrating diagnosis of the American mind; it is an interpretation, a work of art wrought of piercing perceptions, compassionate irony, word melody. Santayana, inheritor of the classic and Catholic traditions, American only by association, ever an alien in our midst, has yet given us an imaginary

portrait of a New England mind that ranks with the self-portrait of *The Education of Henry Adams*.

Nor need we wonder that this distinguished philosopher, this master of English prose, should, like Pater and Melville and many another, have used the novel as a "fable", a medium for reflection upon life. For in telling us, in his "Brief History of my Opinions", "My pleasure was rather in expression, in reflection, in irony", Santayana had already described the very quality of this "memoir in the form of a novel".

A novel with a difference indeed. For Santayana has here used the soliloquy, that sensitive instrument of his earlier philosophic musings, to express his characters and even at times to carry the narrative. Hence, his orchestration is monotonous—like a symphony scored for the solo clarinet. Moreover, as he disarmingly admits in his Epilogue, his men and women all speak his own exquisite and subtle language; they are all incredibly articulate and clairvoyant. But, replies Santayana, fiction is poetry, and all the resources of a poet's language are needed to convey, not the actual speech of his personages, but their real feelings. And indeed with some of them he does achieve a reality that transcends realism. Though most of his women seem images, of the hero's desire or of their creator's ironic vision, his men live with a two-fold intensity, self-revealing and revealed.

Oliver Alden, the "last Puritan", is the child of a thin-spun race, a ferocious Calvinist grandfather and an elderly, weary, drug-haunted father. From this heritage springs his inner conflict. His fearless mind, refusing the narrow puritanism of superstition and sham, hypocrisy and hate, (Oliver, like Santayana, was "never afraid of disillusion") vows itself to integrity and understanding. Yet his inborn sense of duty keeps him submissive to outer compulsions, conscience-bound, root-entangled, unable at moments of choice "to reshape his duty in a truer harmony with his moral nature". Rejecting puritanism, he remained a puritan. And so, dutiful, dedicated, unfulfilled, he yields to the last hated duty of war, and dies in a needless accident after the armistice.

Over against Oliver are set his two friends: "Lord Jim", with his frank animal manliness clothed in those fair outward English ways that Santayana in the *Soliloquies in England* has so lovingly

depicted; and the sunlit worldling Mario, moulded by his Catholic heritage and his Eton education of the English gentleman. The Mario of the Epilogue survives to enrich the future with the grand tradition of the past. Embodying the living forces of nature, "blood within and sunlight above", he represents the good life according to Santayana: the harmony of reason, the happiness of each after his own heart. But the Mario of the novel, with his easy charms and butterfly loves, leaves us cold; it is Oliver of the austere beauty and frustrated passion for perfection who moves us at moments, as he must have moved his creator.

Here, says Santayana, is the tragedy of the puritan: the spirit that seeks to govern and is not content to understand, that rebels against nature and animal faith and demands some absolute sanction for love. But the tragedy of Oliver was deeper than this. Your true puritans, who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, stopped the mouths of lions, were men and women of ardors, even gaiety. Oliver was the child of a dead faith, of a marriage without love and a home without laughter. And so he could neither believe in any cause nor laugh at himself nor forget himself in love. Santayana has portrayed not the tragedy but the death of puritanism.

Again, as in the last chapters of *Character and Opinion in the United States*, one aspect of the American scene is depicted with devastating clarity: that homely, hurried, mechanical life, with its optimism (now dimmed), its mediocrity and compulsions, its "perpetual football match". Santayana knows only "the great emptiness of America"; its richness and its promise he cannot discern. And again the Harvard of his own day, that golden age of philosophy in America of which he was so great a part, is glimpsed, not as his pupils have celebrated it, but as an age of intellectual innocence and earnestness with its "slight smell of brimstone". The superbly satiric sketch of the old Boston of Beacon Hill and King's Chapel is woven partly of his own boyhood memories. But the lonely, tragic beauty of New England, so poignantly rendered in Wolfe's *Of Time and the River*, is to Santayana only meagre and desolate: "there was nothing", he has said, "in which the spirit of beauty was deeply interfused". For beauty charged with passion and discipline he turns to Oxford, described in a passage



of haunting melody that belongs with those other deathless tributes to that place of recollection and fidelity.

These judgments on America, with the yet sterner judgment of Santayana's withdrawal from us, are not new. What *The Last Puritan* leaves with us is not a verdict but an epitaph on a vanished era. If we cannot look to Santayana for guidance toward a fuller life of reason for America that shall also be a life of justice for all, we can be very grateful for a book of remembrance that is so wise, so tender, and so beautiful.

by Anne Bayard Dick

### DUSTY ANSWER

SHAKESPEARE'S IMAGERY. By Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, with charts and illustrations. New York. The Macmillan Company. 1935. 384 pages.

"And what it tells us." In this subtitle lies the question which receives a dusty answer.

Miss Spurgeon, Doctor of Literature at Bedford College, London, whose other literary degrees form a list imposing in its length and quality, has spent ten years in painstaking research and study of all the images employed by Shakespeare. In addition to this she has skillfully collected, classified, and cross-referenced numerous images of twelve of Shakespeare's contemporaries, thus giving a background and means of comparison and thereby attempting to prove that the experience, environment and finally the personality of a writer finds its most direct expression in his imagery. The images of Marlowe, Kyd, Lyly, Bacon, Jonson, Chapman, Massinger and others as well as of Shakespeare are dispersed throughout the book, where they are approached from many angles and discussed in detail. From these

comparisons the question of authorship is made clearer.

But this is not all Miss Spurgeon has done. Seven charts, showing range, subject and dominance of images in selected plays of Shakespeare, and in the works of several of these contemporaries; an appendix, including a count of total number of images appearing in Shakespeare's plays; an explanation as to how this was done and the difficulties involved; "a detailed analysis of the subject matter of these images"; notes on the charts; lists of works of contemporary dramatists from whom she has taken images, conclude a volume that is scholarly in its undertaking. That its quality is pedantic rather than brilliant is perhaps the most regrettable character of the book. In her preface Miss Spurgeon speaks of one of the awesome aspects of her task. "No one could study Shakespeare closely for years without being reduced to a condition of complete humility—and I am fully conscious of my boldness in venturing even to touch the subject, for I know well that I can only scratch the surface of what it is possible to find and reveal in the hitherto uncharted treasures of this rich and varied material."

Has the assembling and examining of Shakespeare's images opened up an "entirely new and illuminating vista of investigation"? Does it "throw new light on the poet and his work"? And finally, will it serve as "an absolute beacon in the skies with regard to the vexed question of authorship"?

Miss Spurgeon's interpretations and handling of the images is conventional to a fault, and her findings make far less demand on the skeptic's sense of credulity than on his interest. In considering the fact of her method as a "fresh one" ("and its novelty lies in the fact that all the images good and bad are assembled for analysis"), it is hard not to believe that equally satisfactory and revealing approaches to Shakespeare have been made by means less selfconscious. In considering the method still further, the germs of psychoanalysis are apparent. Undoubtedly it is a fundamental, a subconscious process that plays a part in the selecting of images or symbols for expression of conscious ideas, and this holds even where the author is wholly objective in his dramatic characters' views. But to inquire further, to interpret these symbols other than superficially is not possible.

In the first part of the book Miss Spurgeon presents Shakespeare the man, his tastes, his inner self, his environment. Rising from the fire of his images she has conjured a figure slight and well built in form with astonishing coördination of mind and body. His complexion was probably light; the color came and went in his cheeks under emotional stress. An expert gardener, a skillful swimmer, horseman and marksman; a sympathetic friend to all dumb animals and especially to birds whose habits he minutely observed. His favorite sport is discovered to be bowling. Green salads and beefsteak delight his sensitive palate and acute sense of smell, which finds greasy and overcooked food most repulsive. Although his primary interest lay in the out of doors he was familiar with all domestic matters. While he had little practical knowledge of the sea, he was on intimate terms with rivers. He hated war, and unharmonious relationships in the social order. There is a marked omission in his images of travel, adventure, town life and literature. In love it is its infiniteness that he dwells upon above all. Hate is fear's opposite rather than love's. In all that is evil he finds sickness and decay. Good and evil are both contagious and poisoners to each other; and here Miss Spurgeon quotes from Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy*: "There is no tragedy in the expulsion of evil. The tragedy is that this involves the waste of good." Is it irrelevant to be reminded of Emerson's "We gain the strength of the things we overcome?" At any rate, after infinite explanations, and summaries, after innumerable Shakespearean quotations, after pages of statements and restatements which make no demand on the reader's intellect and consequently pay it no compliment, Shakespeare emerges as the "most diversely minded and sanest of all men". How much of this has been surmised before?

Deliberately Miss Spurgeon has avoided touching on any of the more concrete facts of the poet's life. Never is he revealed in his relationship as a father, son, husband or lover. All personalities in his environment are conspicuously absent. Perhaps Miss Spurgeon in strict adherence to her method found this incompatible. It is disappointing to be aware of his reaction to overcooked food, with no light shed on his disposition toward Anne Hathaway. Less understandable is the definite omission of intimations of a

coarser side to his nature as apparent in many of his images not included in this book. To quote from her preface, "All his images are assembled and examined on a systematic basis, the good with the bad, the disagreeable with the pleasant, the coarse with the refined." In such a detailed analysis of a man's personality, the absence of any mention of sex is rather extraordinary, and leaves the picture in a state of unnecessary incompleteness.

Far more successful is Part II of the book in its attempt to illuminate certain aspects of the plays through consideration of the images. Such topics as the "function of imagery as background and undertone in Shakespeare's art" includes a study of the leading motives; the effectiveness of recurrent imagery, the analysis of images that dominate and so on, all which information is vital and practical to a better understanding and appreciation. But it is a matter gravely to be doubted that the average student of Shakespeare is not already aware that in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, for example, it is the moon which gives the atmosphere together with images that are strictly poetical and pertain to birds, animals and flowers.

Finally as to the question of authorship, and this is a question with which the ordinary lovers of Shakespeare are not concerned, much information is supplied in the comparison of one author's images with another, which gives a rather decisive stamp and means of identification to all that is Shakespeare's. Just how decisive this is, only the scholars will presume to know or deeply care.

*by David E. Frierson*

### FRENCH POETIC THEORY

THREE CENTURIES OF FRENCH POETIC THEORY. A CRITICAL HISTORY OF THE CHIEF ARTS OF POETRY IN FRANCE, (1328-1630). By Warner Forrest Patterson. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan. 1935. Vol. I, xx+978 pages; vol. II, 523 pages. Vol. I, \$5.00; Vol. II, \$3.50.

Each of these two volumes is divided into two parts. Volume



I, Part I, gives an account of the Arts de Seconde Rhétorique from the medieval Latin and Provençal poets to Jean Le Maire de Belges and the Grands Rhétoriciens. Part II is a history of the Art Poétiques from Marot to Malherbe, being primarily concerned with the Pléiade. Volume II, Part I, contains several chronological lists of treatises on poetic theory from Venerable Bede, in the early ninth century, to Boileau. Part II is an anthology.

The author opens the Foreword with this statement: "No study of the treatises on the art of Poetry written in France during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries which attempts relative completeness has thus far been made. Very competent studies of individual men and less satisfactory surveys of portions in the field of French poetics exist in French, German, Italian, Latin, and English. It is the object of these volumes to weave together the available material in the light of a fresh study of the sources, completing and clarifying wherever possible."

This work constitutes, however, more than the title would indicate: it is at once a scholarly history of literary criticism in French poetry, as well as a highly critical history of three centuries of French poetry. By studying at first hand, as it were, the theories and credos of self-conscious groups of creative writers we achieve an understanding of them that could hardly be gotten in any other way.

One of the worthiest features of this work is the quantity of illustrative quotations from the original treatises of the period under consideration, occupying nearly half of the space and ranging from Brunetto Latini's *Li Livres dou tresor* to Jules Scaliger. Provençal and French selections are given intact in the original spelling; Latin prose passages are translated into English.

Volume II is a generous-sized anthology of three centuries of French Poetry, and contains, to give an idea of its completeness, 600 pieces from a period from which the *Oxford Book of French Verse* has chosen only 130. The poems are grouped according to *genres*, i.e. ballades, chansons, triolets, rondeaux, etc., and each group contains definitions of the type and notes on the various rhyme-schemes. This arrangement, however, which is unsuitable for quick reference, and a rather inadequate index detract somewhat from its value as an anthology.

Is it too much to hope that Dr. Patterson's significant and scholarly work will, in some measure, help to increase interest in that vast body of medieval and renaissance French verse that remained in a profound oblivion from the moment that the French people took the formal excellence of Malherbe's compositions to be the *nec plus ultra* of poetry, until it was rehabilitated by the romantic group of the 1820's? Hours spent in systematic study or casual perusal of these two volumes should compensate generously in increased affection for these healthy, vigorous, and almost primitive poets, frequently neglected by English speaking peoples, in favor of the supposedly more accessible modern and contemporary versifiers whose chief claim to fame is all too often their desire to be morbid or shocking, to "épater le bourgeois".

by Arthur E. DuBois

### INTELLECTUAL LARKING

MAKE IT NEW: ESSAYS. By Ezra Pound. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935. Pp. viii+407. \$3.75.

William James noticed it. He said in effect, "Americans are incapable of intellectual larking." We are culturally unsociable. Though we pride ourselves upon our ingenuity in the mechanical crafts and upon being democratic good fellows, the paradox remains that we despise the master literary craftsman (as Pound is in verse), the cultural playboy (we all came off the Mayflower and kept off Merrie Mount), and the internationalist (witness our condescension towards departments of comparative literature). And so, if a man is interested in literary techniques or is of an intellectually social temperament, like Pound, T. S. Eliot, or Henry James he will be expatriated unless, like James Russell Lowell, he can gather congenial persons about him rarely or subordinate his own to the less urbane interests of others. If a person capable of stimulating a group, of being an excellent editor for example,

cannot find a group, then he will be always not at home, driven in upon himself. An idol of his own cave, he will often therefore use words sounding strange from the tight lips of an intellectual, words too big, yet adjectival, and somehow impotent like calling people names. As he is neglected, moreover, he will be apt to hate the persons who are indifferent to, or ignorant of, his major concerns. Without necessarily understanding them, he may pontificate about native ignoramuses and be fairer to English, Italian, or French. Trying to civilize the barbarians at home, this "snob" or "aristocrat" may easily adopt tones that are anything if not professorial. Accounting for many peculiarities of style, these facts make Pound's chapter on Henry James exceptionally illuminating of both Pound and James.

One of the signs of intellectual sociability is curiosity. American universities hate it. Pound is quite right: "editors, publishers, and universities loathe the inquisitive spirit." But the Yale University Press publishes *Make it New* and on its dust wrapper blurbs it as a study in Pound, as

primarily an anthology of Ezra Pound's criticism from the time when he was the *enfant terrible* of the literary world to this year of grace when T. S. Eliot and Archibald Macleish salute him as *the* poet of our times.

But imagine Mr. Pound nameless, without the approval of the academic Mr. Eliot, submitting this stimulating book, which is gemmed with many shrewd observations and full of information about curious matters, as a doctoral dissertation at Nest University! Professor Roc would say: "I don't think Pound is a desirable Nest U. man. His language is often in the grossest taste. I heard him say, 'the idea of brotherhood, of *fraternité*, has been p—p for the hope of getting a 'fellowship'". Professor Swan: "He doesn't seem to know even what a complete sentence is!" Professor Robin: "Why the title? when he writes about troubadours, Elizabethan minors, early translators of Greek, Henry James, Remy de Gourmont, and *Calvacanti*." Professor Jay: "He is a confounded egotist and should be taken down a peg. He writes as though he were casting pearls, as though his opinion mattered, without transitions, often apparently just publishing his reading notes as he jotted them down. Even I wouldn't do that!"

*Professor Wren (a mild man)*: "But he believes that genius is the ability to detect resemblances between apparently unlike things. He says (p. 336) he thinks that the little of criticism 'which is good is to be found mostly in stray phrases . . .' And he lets his subjects speak for themselves without intruding himself. Look at the amount of quotation!" *Professor Heron*: "He isn't supposed to be making an anthology. His style is inconsistent, jumbled, jerky." *Chairman, Professor Swallow*: "A candidate at Nest must be able to write English. The next candidate is Mr. Shilling. Next!"

All of this is too bad because Mr. Shilling has a perfectly grammatical thesis, in perfect taste, without a single flash of insight or a single sign of a point of view to render his general dullness and remoteness inconsistent, a thesis well weighted with footnotes and appendices as well as with the fruits of research no less curious than Mr. Pound's. To subsidize the publication of this tome even by the Nest University Press will cost him from \$500 to \$2,000 which he cannot afford. Mr. Pound will have gone off proud, too proud, but still worth twenty shillings. And, as Harkness said when in *Strife* he had witnessed the stunting of both Roberts and Anthony, "That's where the fun comes in."

I take it that the phrase "break with tradition" is currently used to mean "desert the more obvious imbecilities of one's immediate elders" . . . It is quite obvious that we do not all of us inhabit the same time . . . "Je veux bien que l'on me protège contre des ennemis inconnus, l'ou le cambrioleur—mais contre moi-même, vices ou passions, non." (pp. 95, 19, 317).

Meanwhile, many of us may feel that some of Mr. Pound's major theses need larger exposition perennially: the relationship of music to speech; the necessity of an expanding consciousness; the relation of economics to literature, one of his later themes. Mr. Pound plays with ideas while most of us university professors of literature labor with facts, their symbols. *We ought to play more.* But there is no need of calling Babbitt other names, and Mr. Pound's advisers were doubtless wise in counseling him against a section on dullards or dunces. It is true, none the less, that often you know peoples or persons best through their worst representatives, the minor workers or works.